

MOTHER INDIA

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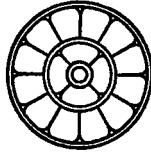
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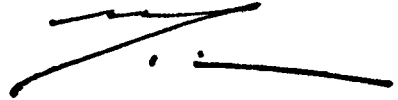


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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A VISION BY THE MOTHER

FIRST PUBLISHED IN "REVUE COSMIQUE", 1906

I WAS asleep and now this on waking up.

I slept on the waters to the West, and now I penetrate the ocean to know its depths. Its surface is green like beryl, silvery with the rays of the moon. Below, the water is blue like sapphire and already a little luminous.

I am lying on the undulations which are like the ripples of watered silk and I go down, swung from one undulation to another in a regular and soft movement, carried in a straight line towards the West. As I go down, the water becomes more luminous; big silvery currents run across it.

And I go down thus for a long time, swung from undulation to undulation, always deeper and deeper.

All of a sudden, looking above me, I see a rosy tint, I go near and distinguish a bush which is like coral, as big as a tree, hanging from a blue rock. The inhabitants of the waters are going and coming, they are innumerable and diverse. Now I am standing on the fine shining sand. I look around me with admiration. There are mountains and valleys, fantastic forests, strange flowers which could well be animals, and fishes which one would take to be flowers—there is no separation, no gap between the stationary and the non-stationary beings. Colours everywhere, soft or living and iridescent, but always refined and in accord. I walk on the sands of gold and contemplate all this beauty that is bathed in a soft and pale blue radiance in which the quite tiny spheres, luminous and red, green or golden, are circling.

How marvellous are the depths of the sea! Everywhere one feels the presence of Him in whom reside all the harmonies!

I advance always towards the West, without getting tired or slowed down. The scenes succeed each other in an unbelievable variety; here on a rock of lapis-lazuli, see tiny and delicate sea-weeds, like long and blond or violet strands of hair; here big rosy walls, all bordered with silver; here flowers which look as if cut in huge diamonds; here shapes as beautiful as if they were the work of the most skilful sculptor; they contain what looks like drops of emerald with alternating pulsations of light and shade.

Now I am moving on a sandy way of silver between two walls of rock as blue as a blue sapphire; the water becomes more pure and luminous.

Unexpectedly, at a turn of the way, I find myself before a grotto which looks as if carved in crystal, shining all over with prismatic radiance.

Between two rainbow-coloured columns there is a being of big stature; his head, that of quite a young man, is encompassed with small blond ringlets, his eyes are green like the sea; he is dressed in a tunic of light blue and on his shoulders there are two big fins, snow-white and wing-shaped. On seeing me, he stands against a column to make room for me to pass. Hardly do I cross the threshold when an exquisite melody comes and strikes on my ears. Here the water is all a rainbow colour, the ground is sanded

with iridescent pearls, the parvis and the vault from which graceful stalactites hang are like opal; delightful perfumes are spread everywhere; there are galleries, openings, corners, on all sides, but straight before me I see a great light and it is towards that that I proceed. There are great rays of gold, of silver, of sapphire, of emerald, of rubies; all these rays take birth at a point too far from me to distinguish what it is and they shoot forth in all directions, I feel myself drawn towards their centre by a powerful attraction.

Now I see where the rays are emanating from, I see an oval of white light surrounded by a superb rainbow. The oval is lying flat, and I sense and perceive that he whom the light is hiding from my sight is plunged in deep repose. For a long time I remain at the outer limit of the rainbow, trying to pierce the light and see him who is sleeping surrounded by such splendour. Unable to distinguish anything thus, I penetrate into the rainbow, then into the white luminous oval; and then I see a marvellous being: he is stretched over what looks like a pile of white down, his supple body of an incomparable beauty is clad in a long white robe. On his head which was resting on his bent arm, I can see only his long hair the colour of ripe wheat, overflowing his shoulders. At this magnificent spectacle a great and sweet emotion invades me, and also a deep reverence.

Did the sleeper feel my presence? See, he wakes up and rises in all his beauty and grace. He turns towards me and his eyes meet mine, his mauve and luminous eyes which have an expression of sweetness and infinite tenderness. Without the noise of words he wishes me a touching welcome, to which my whole being responds joyously; then taking me by the hand, he conducts me to the couch he has just left. I stretch myself on this downy whiteness, and the harmonious face bends over me; a soft current of force penetrates me wholly, vitalising, revivifying each cell.

Then, surrounded by the splendid colours of the rainbow, enveloped by the soothing melodies and exquisite perfumes, under such a powerful and tender look, I go to sleep in a beatific repose. And during my sleep I learn many beautiful and useful things.

Of all these marvellous things which I understood without the noise of words, I shall mention only one.

Wherever there is beauty, wherever there is radiance, wherever there is progression towards perfection, be it in the Heaven high up or down in the depths, everywhere there is assuredly the being in the form and likeness of man—man, the supreme terrestrial evolver.

(Translated by Shyam Sundar from the French)

RADHA AND THE DIVINE AS LOVE-BEAUTY-BLISS

SOME WRITINGS OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

WHATEVER the motive immediately pushing the mind or the vital, if there is a true seeking for the Divine in the being, it must lead eventually to the realisation of the Divine. The soul within has always the inherent (*ahaituki*) yearning for the Divine; the *hetu* or special motive is simply an impulsion used by it to get the mind and the vital to follow the inner urge. If the mind and the vital can feel and accept the soul's sheer love for the Divine for his own sake, then the sadhana gets its full power and many difficulties disappear; but even if they do not, they will get what they seek after in the Divine and through it they will come to realise something, even to pass beyond the limit of the original desire. . . I may say that the idea of a joyless God is an absurdity, which only the ignorance of the mind could engender! The Radha love is not based upon any such thing, but means simply that whatever comes on the way to the Divine, pain or joy, *milana* or *viraha*, and however long the sufferings may last, the Radha love is unshaken and keeps its faith and certitude pointing fixedly like a star to the supreme object of Love.

What is this Ananda, after all? The mind can see in it nothing but a pleasant psychological condition,—but if it were only that, it could not be the rapture which the bhaktas and the mystics find in it. When the Ananda comes into you, it is the Divine who comes into you, just as when the Peace flows into you, it is the Divine who is invading you, or when you are flooded with Light, it is the flood of the Divine himself that is around you. Of course, the Divine is something much more, many other things besides, and in them all a Presence, a Being, a Divine Person; for the Divine is Krishna, is Shiva, is the Supreme Mother. But through the Ananda you can perceive the Anandamaya Krishna, for the Ananda is the subtle body and being of Krishna; through the Peace you can perceive the Shantimaya Shiva; in the Light, in the delivering Knowledge, the Love, the fulfilling and uplifting Power you can meet the presence of the Divine Mother. It is this perception that makes the experiences of the bhaktas and mystics so rapturous and enables them to pass more easily through the nights of anguish and separation; when there is this soul-perception, it gives to even a little or brief Ananda a force or value it could not otherwise have, and the Ananda itself gathers by it a growing power to stay, to return, to increase.¹

*

The story of Brindavan. . . does not enter into the main story of the Mahabharata and has a Puranic origin and it could be maintained that it was intended all along to have a symbolic character. At one time I accepted that explanation, but I had to abandon it afterwards; there is nothing in the Puranas that betrays any such inten-

¹ Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, 22: 173-4.

tion. It seems to me that it is related as something that actually occurred or occurs somewhere. The Gopis are to them realities and not symbols. It was for them at the least an occult truth, and occult and symbolic are not the same thing; the symbol may be only a significant mental construction or only a fanciful invention, but the occult is a reality which is actual somewhere, behind the material scene as it were and can have its truth for the terrestrial life and its influence upon it may even embody itself there. The Lila of the Gopis seems to be conceived as something which is always going on in a divine Gokul and which projected itself in an earthly Brindavan and can always be realised and its meaning made actual in the soul. It is to be presumed that the writers of the Puranas took it as having been actually projected on earth in the life of the incarnate Krishna and it has been so accepted by the religious mind of India.¹

*

Radha is the personification of the absolute love for the Divine, total and integral in all parts of the being from the highest spiritual to the physical, bringing the absolute self-giving and total consecration of all the being and calling down into the body and the most material nature the supreme Ananda.²

*

The coming of sex on seeing the image of Krishna and Radha is due to the past association of sex with the cult of Radha-Krishna. But in fact the image has nothing to do with sex. The true symbol for it would not be the human sex-attraction, but the soul, the psychic, hearing the call of the Divine and flowering into the complete love and surrender that brings the supreme Ananda. That is what Radha and Krishna by their divine union bring about in the human consciousness and it is so that you must regard it, throwing aside the old sex-associations.³

*

Q: In the "Chandi"⁴ the names of the four Cosmic Powers of the Mother—Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati—are mentioned along with others, but the name "Radha" is not mentioned. This is a clear proof of the fact that when the "Chandi" was composed the Radha-Power was not manifested to the vision of the saints and that the "Chandi" mentions only the Cosmic Powers of the Mother and not her supramental Powers. In the book The Mother, after describing the four

¹ SABCL, 22:426.

² SABCL, 23:796.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ A Tantric Scripture forming a part of Markandeya Purana. 7.

*Powers of the Mother, you have said: "There are other great Personalities of the Divine Mother, but they were more difficult to bring down and have not stood out in front with so much prominence in the evolution of the earth-spirit. There are among them Presences indispensable for the supramental realisation, most of all one who is her Personality of that mysterious and powerful ecstasy and Ananda that alone can heal the gulf between the highest heights of the supramental spirit and the lowest abysses of Matter, the Ananda that holds the key of a wonderful divinest Life and even now supports from its secrecies the work of all the Powers of the universe."*¹ Is not the Personality referred to in this passage the Radha-Power which is spoken of as Premamayi Radha, Mahaprana Shakti and Hladini Shakti?

A: Yes; but the images of the Radha-Krishna *līlā* are taken from the vital world and therefore it is only an inner manifestation of the Radha-Shakti that is there depicted. That is why she is called Mahaprana Shakti and Hladini Shakti. What is referred to in the passage quoted is not this inner form but the full Power of Love and Ananda above.²

7-2-1934

*

. . . under the stress of temperamental variation the poetry of the Vaishnavas puts on very different artistic forms in different provinces. There is first the use of the psychical symbol created by the Puranas, and this assumes its most complete and artistic shape in Bengal and becomes there a long continued tradition. The desire of the soul for God is there thrown into symbolic figure in the lyrical love cycle of Radha and Krishna, the Nature soul in man seeking for the Divine Soul through love, seized and mastered by his beauty, attracted by his magical flute, abandoning human cares and duties for this one overpowering passion and in the cadence of its phases passing through first desire to the bliss of union, the pangs of separation, the eternal longing and reunion, the lila of the love of the human spirit for God. There is a settled frame and sequence, a subtly simple lyrical rhythm, a traditional diction of appealing directness and often of intense beauty. This accomplished lyrical form springs at once to perfect birth from the genius of the first two poets who used the Bengali tongue, Bidyapati, a consummate artist of word and line, and the inspired singer Chandidas in whose name stand some of the sweetest and most poignant and exquisite love-lyrics in any tongue. The symbol here is sustained in its most external figure of human passion and so consistently that it is now supposed by many to mean nothing else, but this is quite negated by the use of the same figures by the devout poets of the religion of Chaitanya. All the spiritual experience that lay behind the symbol was embodied in that inspired prophet and incarnation of the ecstasy of divine love and its spiritual philosophy put into clear form in his teaching. His followers continued the

¹ SABCL, 25: 35-36.

² SACBL, 25:73-74.

poetic tradition of the earlier Singers and though they fall below them in genius, yet left behind a great mass of this kind of poetry always beautiful in form and often deep and moving in substance. Another type is created in the perfect lyrics of the Rajput Queen Mirabai, in which the images of the Krishna symbol are more directly turned into a song of the love and pursuit of the divine Lover by the soul of the singer. In the Bengal poetry the expression preferred is the symbolic figure impersonal to the poet: here a personal note gives the peculiar intensity to the emotion. This is given a still more direct turn by a southern poetess in the image of herself as the bride of Krishna. The peculiar power of this kind of Vaishnava religion and poetry is in the turning of all the human emotions Godward, the passion of love being preferred as the intensest and most absorbing of them all, and though the idea recurs wherever there has been a strong development of devotional religion, it has nowhere been used with so much power and sincerity as in the work of the Indian poets.¹

*

Q: Can you tell me whether Radha actually existed? Volumes are being written to prove that she did not.

A: Surely she has lived and is still living.

*

Radha's consciousness symbolises perfect attachment to the Divine.²

*

Krishna's play in Matter: beauty, love, and joy are comrades; a play which widens and makes you progress.³

*

Krishna's play in the physical: the rule of the Avatar upon earth, that is to say, the realisation of the new divine world.⁴

¹ SABCL, 14:317-18.

² *The Mother's Collected Works*, 15:16.

³ *Ibid.*, 15:15.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 15:15-16.

NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

THE COMPLETE SET

(Continued from the issue of May 1981)

October 10, 1935

B's case is contagious. How can we keep him here in such a closed place?

THESE two people B.P. and R.K. seem rather hopeless physically, but we don't quite know what to do with them. To send them off is harsh, to keep them is bothersome, so?

Do you advise that B.P. should not work in the D.R.?

Please cast a glance on the typed letters about A.D. I suppose you wouldn't mind a copy being sent to him? I won't send, but if others do?

No, it is not meant for him. It is only a bit of fun between ourselves. If there is any danger of anyone doing that it is better to keep it to yourself.

October 11, 1935

The Mother once said that there is hardly a disease that cannot be cured by Yoga. Can cancer be cured by it?

Of course it can, but on condition of faith or openness or both. Even a mental suggestion can cure cancer—with luck of course, as is shown by the case of the woman operated on unsuccessfully for cancer, but the doctors lied and told her it had succeeded. Result, cancer symptoms all ceased and she died many years afterwards of another illness altogether.

October 12, 1935

My disgust is becoming more and more acute as regards poetry. I suppose the slightly lit-up channel has closed again. Things are pushing me towards medicine—an absolutely opposite pole! Where is your alchemist, Sir?

Has taken opium probably and is seeing visions somewhere. Perhaps they will come out some day from your suddenly galvanised pen.

October 16, 1935

In your letter to Somnath you said that what is most needed is an upward aspiration. But then what about the other two movements: rejection and surrender you mention in The Mother?

It was not necessary to mention all that. I was only answering a limited question, not giving a whole theory of yoga to Somnath.

Don't you think that aspiration being equal, a rajasic man will meet with a greater resistance in rejecting his lower impulses than a sattwic man?

That is implied in what I said about the sattwic man having the advantage. Somnath's question seemed to be about the approach to spirituality, Yoga, not as to what would happen to the two kinds of people in the course of the sadhana. But obviously the rajasic movements are likely to create more trouble than the sattwic ones. The greatest difficulty of the sattwic man is the snare of virtue and self-righteousness, the ties of philanthropy, mental idealisms, family affections etc, but except the first, these are, though difficult, still not so difficult to overpass or else transform. Sometimes however these things are as sticky as the rajasic difficulties.

Since the desires are strong in the rajasic man they will surely thwart the fire of aspiration rising upwards, won't they?

All that is logical, but it does not happen in every case. It may be true in your case, but what of St. Augustine, Jagai Madhai, Bilwamangal and the rest? St. Augustine had difficulties, but they do not seem to have been of a very violent character, the others are described as having made a total volte face, I believe.

If I had been a predominantly sattwic man, you would have had much less trouble from me.

No doubt. But you are not after all a thief, debauchee, drunkard or gangster. You may say perhaps that if you had been, you could have been a great saint also, violently sinning, violently repenting, violently sanctifying yourself? Perhaps that was the secret of St. Augustine and the others!

So you can see that aspiration per se, however strong and true, cannot achieve much.

Who says no?

Or do you mean that a strong aspiration will necessarily bring in rejection and surrender?

Of course.

Next, though sinners and robbers have been converted into saints, their number must be very small compared to the sattwic type.

It may be so, but that is not my experience. The highly sattwic are few; the abnormally rajasic are few; of the middle sort there are many. According to my observation, this is true not only of this Ashram but of others.

If so, can one say that in the evolution of consciousness sattwic people are more evolved than the others? Narrow logic again?

Um! somewhat! There are all sorts among the more evolved, among the less evolved there are many sattwic people also, mere good people who don't amount to much. One pats them on the back and goes farther. But don't twist this into meaning that I prefer the nasty bad ones. I don't; they give too much trouble. Only life, evolution, human character and things generally in this perplexing world are disconcertingly complex and can't be dismissed with a few simpler affirmations.

M says that his head seems to be better but he doesn't know if eruptions will come out again, if the treatment is stopped. So he suggests you will be a better judge to say whether the disease is still inside or not.

How am I to know? The inside of his head is opaque not transparent. So long as it does not come again from outside with a new sowing!

October 17, 1935

One or two points on your second letter to Somnath. First about sacrifice, you know plenty of young lads have sacrificed their lives for the country by going to jail, being interned, but also by terrorism. They believe in the sacredness of their cause and so have sacrificed themselves by adopting means which they think would best serve their cause. Would you call their sacrifice a 'misguided' one?

Self-sacrifice for the country's sake has certainly a moral value. The "terrorism" brings in another element and assimilates it to the act of a fighter, less sattwic and more rajasic in its nature. I am not sure that I would be willing to call that a sacrifice in the moral or sattwic sense. In Bhishma's case the element of sacrifice came not in fighting and killing for the sake of Dhritarashtra but in his knowing that he must die and accepting it for his ideal of loyalty. Of course, you may say that every man who risks his life does an act of sacrifice, but then we come back to very primitive ideas. I take the word in Somnath's letter in a less outward sense, otherwise my answer might have been different.

Recently an ignorant fanatic killed somebody whom he took to be irreverent to his Teacher. He was in turn killed by the Court. Did he make a sacrifice of his life for a noble cause?

It seems to me that he made the sacrifice of another's life and not his own. In that way a murderer can also be said to make a sacrifice of his life to his desires or his passions, for he risks the gallows. Note that the fanatic tried to escape the gallows. Even taking it that he gave his life, it was for a reward, Paradise. His act is therefore at best equivalent to that of a soldier killing and getting killed. It cannot be called sacrifice, except in the old sense of the word, when you killed a cow or a goat on an altar to get religious merit. For, the essence of this kind of act of fanaticism is, admittedly, the killing of the unbeliever and not the giving of your own life. Would you call it self-sacrifice if you offered a goat at Kalighat? It would be for the goat if it assented to the affair, but for yourself? Of course there is the price of the goat—you might pride yourself on that sacrifice. There is nothing noble besides in fanaticism—there is no nobility of motive, though there may be a fierce enthusiasm of motive. Religious fanaticism is something psychologically low-born and ignorant—and usually in its action fierce, cruel and base. Religious ardour like that of the martyr who sacrifices himself only is a different thing.

It seems difficult to understand when the Mother says that spiritual sacrifice is joyful.

She was speaking of the true spiritual sacrifice, not the bringing of an unwilling heart to the altar.

It seems to me that pain and struggle are bound to be there at the beginning of spiritual sacrifice by one who has tasted the joys of life.

It simply means that your sacrifice is still mental and has not yet become spiritual in its character. When your vital being consents to give up its desires and enjoyments, when it offers itself to the Divine, then the Yajna will have begun. What I meant was that the European sense of the word is not the sense of the word "Yajna" or the sense of "sacrifice" in such phrases as "the sacrifice of works". It doesn't mean that you give up all works for the sake of the Divine—for there would be no sacrifice of works at all. Similarly the sacrifice of knowledge doesn't mean that you painfully and resolutely make yourself a fool for the sake of the Lord. Sacrifice means an inner offering to the Divine and the real spiritual sacrifice is a very joyful thing. Otherwise one is only trying to make oneself fit and has not yet begun the real Yajna. It is because your mind is struggling with your vital, the unwilling animal and asking it to allow itself to be immolated that there is the pain and struggle. If the spiritual will (or psychic) were more in the front then you would not be lamenting over the loss of the ghee and butter and curds thrown into the Fire or trying to have a last lick at it before casting it. The only difficulty would be about bringing down the gods fully enough (a progressive

labour), not about lamentations over the ghee. By the way, do you think that the Mother or myself or others who have taken up the spiritual life had not enjoyed life and that it is therefore that the Mother was able to speak of a joyous sacrifice to the Divine as a true spirit of spiritual sacrifice? Or do you think we spent the preliminary stages in longings for the lost fleshpots of Egypt and that it was only later on we felt the joy of the spiritual sacrifice? Of course we did not; we and many others had no difficulty on the score of giving up anything we thought necessary to give up and no hankering afterwards. Your rule is as usual a stiff rule that does not at all apply generally.

October 18, 1935

You always paralyse me by bringing in Mother and yourself, non-humans as examples to humans!

All this about human and non-human is sheer rubbish, your usual red herring across the path; you use it in order to argue that our knowledge and experience are of no practical value because they apply to us alone and cannot apply to or help human beings. As if no human beings ever had a clear mind and strong will able to make a resolution and carry it out without vital struggles and repinings. There are thousands who have done so. Even most ordinary men can do it when the passion for a cause seizes them. I have seen that in hundreds during the Swadeshi times. And do you think none who were human ever had conquered passion for the Divine?

Somnath suggests that I might try to write humorous stories, since he suspects that there is humour in me; however glum my outer appearance may be. He argues further that "since Sri Aurobindo is so witty in your letters, you must surely have that element in you, which invites some response to it". Well, Sir?

There is a psychological truth involved in that reasoning. But it may be that it is an appreciation of humour rather than a power of humorous creation.

How is it that sometimes secular literature moves one more, and gives a greater light than religious literature?

Religious literature inspires only the religious-minded,—and most religious literature, apart from the comparatively few great books, is poor stuff. Secular literature either appeals to the idealistic mind or to the emotions or to the aesthetic element in us, and all that has a much easier and more common appeal. As for spiritual light, it is another thing altogether. Spirituality is other than mental idealism and other than religion.

In literary expression, I think it is the inner man that counts; but doesn't that imply that unless one is utterly and absolutely sincere the work will not express something genuine and true which the reader can grasp?

Plenty of insincere men have written inspiring things. That is because something in them felt it, though they could not carry it out in life, and that something was used by a greater power behind. Very often in his art, in his writings, the higher part of a man comes out, while the lower dominates his life.

What shall we say then about X? You seem to have said that his poems have helped many people, yet he was not quite sincere to his mood in his expression. Mother also spoke of his insincerity, it seems, and remarked that if he had been sincere his poems would have had a great force.

The Mother spoke of the poetry written in his bad after-days when he was merely repeating himself. It does not mean that nothing he wrote was sincere.

October 19, 1935

B.P. has trouble now affecting eyes, ears, throat and skin. He needs a very energetic treatment for about 6 months and isolation. A safe solution would be to ask him to go back home.

Can you speak to G, B's brother, and explain to him the situation from the medical and hygienic point of view ...¹ viz. necessity of isolation, 2 years' course or minimum 6 months, danger to sadhaks of his coming to Pranam so that he will have to stop the Pranam etc., etc.? We shall have to decide after communicating with G, but I would prefer if all that can be told to him (with medical authority) rather than have to write at length.

About sacrifice and the rest, I keep silent tonight, since a cyclone is feared.

I am ready for it, but it has not arrived up till now—I a.m.

I am trying hard to understand your Life Divine, like a dog at his bone. But at places I am at sea. Shall I take X's or Y's help? Who is better?

I know nothing of X's capacity for explaining philosophy. Y? Well, he has translated it like everything else. Z would be the best man, but he is probably too busy and too lazy.

October 20, 1935

I explained to G the situation. But B.P. seems to be quite willing to face the quarantine for 1 or 2 years if necessary.

¹ One word illegible.

Can you draw up more precisely necessary rules for isolation? Also see the house where they are living (B, RK and RB) and what can be done so that there may be least chance of contamination? You might absolve RB but she would be quite at sea among strangers. No pranam of course; separate dishes, but the rest?

What's all this that Jaswant says, about his inner vital contact with Anilbaran?

Jaswant's inner imaginations, nothing more substantial than that.

He says Mother has made this contact.

Rubbish! Mother never even dreamed of doing it.

He says further that he wants a direct contact with the Mother which Anilbaran doesn't allow, saying that he must do it through him.

Rubbish! Anilbaran would be the last person to prevent anyone from receiving the Mother's influence.

You have also conceded to this view. Very interesting, if true.

Rubbish! I never did.

They may be interesting but they are not true.

Are all these really true? And does he understand them?

Not at all. These are constructions and imaginations of a very active vital mind.

*I wish I had known some of this business, but
Alas, cult or occult
Nothing do I know;
Blindly, blindly like an ass
Braying incessantly I go.*

What a beautiful poem! You wrote it yourself? It is in Dara's most modernist style.

October 21, 1935

I saw Madanlal going about with bare clothing. Not good for asthma.

What the deuce is bare clothing? I have heard only of a bare body etc. Your Aeschylean expressions are sometimes very puzzling.

About The Life Divine class I would have loved to read with Z, but his Purusha-like bearing scares one. You know he refused even to take up and only by Mother's order he did it.

Take up what? You have already asked him for the L.D. and been sent banging? Or is it something else indicated by an Aeschylean ellipsis?

I asked also Rishabhchand but he has no time. Hence those two, thinking that they understand at least better than I.

Which two, Great Heavens, O Aeschylus? R and Z? Or X and Y? I suppose the latter. And the elliptical "Hence those two"—Hence I asked about those two? I shall become quite a skilful Aeschylean scholar at this rate.

I shall have to fall back on myself for The Life Divine.

You might try. Read an unintelligible para from the L.D., then sit in vacant meditation and see what comes from the intuitive Gods. They will probably play jokes with you, but what does it matter? One learns by one's errors and marches to success through one's failures.

About that poem, it is all my writing, Sir, and all rights reserved. These are glimpses of something turning up some day, even though the sky is cloudy now. Micawberism, par excellence!

Nirod Micawber (Talukdar no more). That is a good idea.

October 22, 1935

Saulen is suffering from neuralgia, no doubt but try to the joint trouble.

This is worse than Aeschylus. Is it an Egyptian hieroglyph? English? Bengali? Shorthand?

I intend to give him a salicylate, iodine or arsenic one after the other.

It looks like throwing stones at a dog in the hope that one of them will hit him.

A screen examination is advisable. These things are intractable and there is a hereditary taint.

Well, you can do the screen exam, but if there is any scream on the screen, be dis-

creet and let us know first before Sailen is informed. After we know what's the matter, can fix medicine.

Do you mean that the method you advised for reading The Life Divine can really do something? I understand that you wrote many things in that way, but people also say that Gods — no, Goddesses — used to come and tell you the meaning of Vedas.

It was a joke. But all the same that is the way things are supposed to come. When the mind becomes decently quiet, an intuition perfect or imperfect is supposed to come hopping along and jump in and look round the place. Of course, it is not the only way. People talk a stupendous amount of rubbish. I wrote everything I have written since 1909 in that way, i.e. out of or rather through a silent mind, and not only a silent mind but a silent consciousness. But Gods and Goddesses had nothing to do with the matter.

But no Goddesses for poor folks like us; they can only cut jokes, play pranks or tease our tails, that's all. ♪

Well, if they tease your tail sufficiently, might not a poem be the result?

I read somewhere of people suddenly merging into silence and emerging with a resplendent solution. I wonder how.

What does it matter how it happens, provided it does happen.

I had a dream last night that I have found some hidden treasure consisting of silver coins, but at the bottom, bundles of incense sticks.

Silver=spirituality. Silver coins=spiritual wealth. Incense sticks=devotion, bhakti, worship of the Divine.

Jaswant says that the dream obviously means spiritual wealth. Have I got it? When? Where?

It is an offer of these things to you, probably from some tail-teasing God or Goddess.

(To be continued)

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

(Continued from the issue of May 1981)

5

I TOOK up embroidery work and started making a screen for the big door of the Mother's room. Sanjiban, a fine artist of the Ashram, had prepared the design according to her instructions. All the houses of the French Regime had very large doors and windows. For one of those doors I was preparing a huge screen which would hang down to the floor as we find in drawing-rooms. Since some embroidery work had to be done upon the screen, I went to see the Mother to receive instructions about it. She, after a moment's silence, asked, "Maurice Magre will be paying a visit to the Ashram. Can you finish the screen before he comes? You have still three months." I replied with gusto, "Certainly, Mother, I can." She was pleased and blessed me. With much joy I did pranam at her feet and received, along with her blessing, a big red rose, signifying "All human passion turned into love for the Divine." I returned with the firm resolve that I must fulfil my promise. I surmised that if I had to do it I must work eleven to twelve hours a day. I started in right earnest. It was a great surprise that I never felt tired in the least after working at a stretch for many hours. Since the mind dwelt in the Mother's consciousness it brought deep concentration, and joy in the work, especially because I was fulfilling the Mother's wish.

Let me give a little description of the detailed work upon the screen, so that one may appreciate it fully. First, one sees a part of a huge trunk of a tree against the body of the screen; thick branches stem out of it, mounting upwards, and on the top of one of the branches a white peacock is seated and looks downwards, while another white peacock perched below gazes at the upper one, stretching his neck. Each peacock is as big as a well-developed Bengali girl. Sanjiban's design was superb. I felt distinctly during the work where the flow of energy came from, abolishing all sense of fatigue. Not only so, I had spiritual perceptions of many kinds. I finished the screen in time and went to see the Mother. With close scrutiny and visible pleasure she examined all the details of the work. Her joy seemed to be much more than mine. Here was a new experience for me. I do not remember to have seen anyone who took so much interest, appraise the value and appreciate in this manner. I spread the whole screen on the floor and the Mother looked and looked, her face beaming, and then she said in French, "Oh, ça, c'est magnifique!" I felt my cup was full. Even now that screen is hung in Sri Aurobindo's room on each November-Darshan day. One has to see it in order to believe that something made fifty years ago could be preserved with so much care. What should have worn out fold by fold remains

intact in all its splendour. This is how, I thought in wonder, the Mother transmutes our offering of brass into gold.

Now I shall relate two strange dreams of mine. They were so clear and distinct that I took them to be more than dreams. Whatever significance they had for me, I communicated it to the Mother. The first dream:

“I saw from inside a room the sea coming near the house and then beginning to swell into huge mountains. If these terrifying surges broke, I felt the entire town, at least myself, would be swept away. But death being so near could not frighten or disturb me at all. I felt somewhere quite secure and well-protected by an armour. Even if the waves surged in a flood, they would pass over my house and I would remain unhurt—that was my feeling. So I could quietly watch the waves from inside my closed windows. Now they came in rapid succession and burst into a vast sheet of water and then the flood rushed far beyond my house. I saw this deluge like a witness and was in no way involved in it. And what I called my house was not really so. When the flood had stopped and the water had drawn back, I began to inspect the outside and noticed that some portion of the house had crumbled down and a new building was coming up from within. I reflected, amazed, ‘Oh, I did not know that a new house was being built from inside the old one. As the wall is broken down in parts, I can see the new foundation.’

“I was observing closely and found it very strange and could not but admire the new method of construction. I went inside the house and when I came out, the entire old house seemed to have tumbled down and in its place stood a house with a different design, made of quite other materials.

“I have interpreted the dream in this way. In the first part, I felt completely safe in the midst of danger, because I lived under your protection. The danger, not being able to make any dent on the fort, has passed over. I remained safe and sound. Would it mean that the flood of desires comes to carry us away, but if we live in our true being, guarded by the Divine, it passes without touching us and we can witness the dance of the stormy surges in a detached manner? This was the meaning I could gather from the first part of the dream. About the second part it was like this: the old house in which I lived was my external being with its old nature. From the very bottom of this old nature you had started building a new nature. We do not notice the new construction because we are not sufficiently conscious of the Divine’s work, so that when the veil of darkness is partly dropped (corresponding to the partial collapse of the house), we become conscious of it. And with the growth of the consciousness, the light increases and finally is revealed the transformed being in the true light of the developed awareness. The new house is the symbol of the radical transformation of human nature.”

Sri Aurobindo wrote:

“It was a good symbolic dream and your interpretation seems to me correct except for one detail. The sea cannot be the tide of vital desires; it must be the flood of the world forces.” (9.1.1932)

The second dream:

A few of us were walking along a sea-shore. The sea was not at all like the one normally known. The very sight of it was fearful and terrible; its water was jet-black and crammed with frightful sea-creatures—each one of them most hideous and all pullulating in the dark water. The body felt terribly uneasy. Most of these beings were like huge snakes: long, thick and black. There were no waves. As far as one could see, it was a dreadful vast and dark expanse of water stretched, as it were, like a gigantic snake, giving a sense of terror. Far away could be seen a very exquisite island where the Mother and Sri Aurobindo lived. I had to go there, but no way could be found. One could not even think of swimming across; the sea was so packed with those strange animals. In trying to swim one would have to brush against them. But, strangely enough, when my companions had gone forward, I plunged into that sea and began to swim along with those pullulating beasts. Pushing them aside with both hands I made my way through them more than through the water, but my gaze was fixed towards the island where the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were. I felt I must reach there. Nothing else mattered. As I neared the island my feet touched the bottom and with a great joy I walked to the shore. Suddenly I saw Sri Aurobindo with his two hands outstretched and, lifting me up, he said, “You have crossed.” I was so happy to hear it that even after waking up from the dream, I said again and again to myself, “When Sri Aurobindo has uttered these words, cross I must.”

I understood from this dream what Sri Aurobindo meant by the word “plunge”. Looking no other way, thinking of nothing else, if one could take the plunge for the Divine alone, the Divine himself would come and land us on the shore. Otherwise one could go on cogitating and no way would be found and the plunge remain untaken. Once the plunge is taken, considerations of duty or danger have no place. This was revealed in the dream. Daunted by nothing, with eyes fixed upon the island, I advanced and Sri Aurobindo delivered me. Though a dream it was, it brought an inexpressible taste of delight not to be affected by anything.

I was to see the Mother the next morning. So I told her orally the dream. She heard intently and placed her hand for a long while on my head and said sweetly, “It is not a mere dream.” She said many other things besides, which cannot be told.

Now let me narrate the story of my experiences while I was singing. Here is my letter to the Mother:

“Mother mine,

“I had a wonderful experience. I cannot but write to you about it at once. There is a song of Kabir, ‘Conquering my heart, Sri Rama was seated within it.’ I was singing it, sitting alone on the terrace at about 7 p.m. I wished to sing it to you on Friday. I had often had my good experiences during singing. I had felt then the descent of a being and its presence, and that I was just an instrument. All the movements of my songs were led by it. Sometimes it gave me the perception of a wide opening of my inner self, and an aspiration rising from a deep source lifted my entire being to a summit height. But what happened today was unique. It was like this.

“When I had sung a part of Kabir’s song, I could feel a power coming down and the volume of my voice increasing. The inner self opened entirely, and strange tunes and rhythms began to pour out spontaneously with such speed that I wondered how it was possible. There was a clear feeling that they owed nothing to me, that I was just a channel and they came tumbling down eager to express themselves. Suddenly I heard my voice gaining twice its volume—so much force was there. And I heard distinctly another voice expressing itself through my voice. When I experienced this, I felt it was no longer myself or my own desire that was singing. I could not stop, it did not depend on me. I had never sung a single song at such length, I was simply charmed and overwhelmed by these exceptional manifestations of sound, voice and tune.”

Sri Aurobindo answered:

“Yes, it was quite right and a very high experience.”

After this experience, I observed that the atmosphere, when I sang on the terrace to the Mother alone, was quite different from the one when I sang at other places. I wrote to the Mother:

“Oh Mother,

“I have observed that when I sing to you on your terrace, the voice becomes very forceful, which is not so elsewhere. So I wrote to you that a special force works from behind, making me sing differently. It must be your force, isn’t it, Mother? I feel it must be your force that makes me sing and makes the singing so intense. The difference is too obvious! But why should it be so? If it is your force acting I should sing equally well everywhere. If I have a psychic connection with you, such difference as regards time and space should not be there. Is it not then my inability to remain in the true consciousness, the true condition, that makes the difference?”

Sri Aurobindo wrote in reply:

“You have seen very accurately (as expressed in today’s letter) the reason for the difference between your singing on the roof and your singing elsewhere. But that is no reason why you should not sing elsewhere.” (19.3.1932)

The first time I became nervous in my life was when I had to sing before Sri Aurobindo on 15th August 1929 (the day of his Darshan).

I had come to the Ashram the previous year in November. The Darshan was finished in the morning. At 4 p.m., when the Mother was to distribute the Darshan-garlands from the Darshan-room, Dilip and I were supposed to sing in the Meditation Hall, sitting near the third door on the right side. That door would remain closed and just behind it, from the adjacent room, Sri Aurobindo would hear our song. I had sung in many big gatherings, had danced before Rabindranath on the stage without ever knowing what nervousness was. I first started singing D.L. Roy’s “Shall I worship you in the form of an idol?”—Dilip was playing on the harmonium. I found that my voice had turned absolutely wooden, hard like the bamboo, no suppleness, no flexibility at all. This had never happened before. I sang all right but it was by no means singing. Then, when Dilip sang, it was not bad, though it was not in his

usual style. At the end, we sang a duet, a song by Mirabai "Keep me as thy servant." Now we could sing a little better and more freely. How strange! I asked the Mother, "What can be the reason, Mother? I have never become nervous wherever I have sung before!"

The Mother replied, "You forget in whose Presence you were singing. Your vital being became nervous before that Divine Presence."

Once in one or two months the Mother used to hear our music in the hall before Amrita's room—Dilip and myself, either of us alone, or together. Those inmates who could sing were sometimes trained by Dilip and they also sang. The Mother would sit in front and our music was intensely felt as an offering at her feet. What a difference between singing before her and elsewhere! Those who were present at these soirées had various experiences which they wrote to the Mother. There were choruses too in which my sisters took part. A South Indian sadhak also joined us. He used sometimes to sing Hindi classical songs.

Singing to the Mother was enough of an inner plenitude: when, besides, the next morning Sri Aurobindo sent his opinions written in his own hand, it was a double joy, not possible to express in words. There used to be instrumental music also. Doraiswamy played on the Veena. Sometimes, Doraiswamy, his daughter Kausiki and I used to play together—they played on the Veena and I on the Sitar. I either practised old tunes in a new way or played an entirely new one. Once all of us together played an old tune called 'Kalengra', with many new things added to it. The Mother liked it very much. Whenever something especially pleased her, she wanted it to be repeated in the next soirée.

Lalita, a Parsi sadhika, used to play on the piano. She joined our chorus. Then there was an English lady named by Sri Aurobindo Nandini, who was an exquisite cello-player. The Mother liked her music immensely. Sri Aurobindo considered her a born musician. When, however, she played in our chorus, it was simply splendid. She also accompanied Dilip's European music. Dilip's voice was marvellous, and the Mother liked to hear his European music very much. Her power of inspiration cut a new way for him in his world of songs.

On 24th April, 1932, we arranged a musical soirée, very probably to celebrate the Mother's final arrival in Pondicherry on that day twelve years earlier. The next day, she sent this written message-cum-blessing:

"To all those who took part in today's singing and music:

Sri Aurobindo and myself have felt that there was a great progress this time. It was not only from the exterior point of view of execution, but in the greater aim of the concentration behind it and in the inner attitude.

May the day bring its benediction to all." (24.4.1932)

(To be continued)

(Translated by Nirodbaran from the Bengali)

LIFE—YOGA—PHILOSOPHY

TWO LETTERS

16. 4. 1975

Both your letters were very welcome. I didn't think the second was just a reminder. I am sure you were anxious to know why I had not written back about ourselves. We are in fair health and the absence of reply had nothing to do with my famous fractured fibula or Sehra's notoriously awful asthma. My fibula, I am told, will heal in two years' time—because I am seventy. Mention of seventy recalls to me the visit of a pocket-sized sannyasi recently. He asked me what my age was. I replied, "Seventy." He smiled and said, "You don't look it." Very coyly I asked, "No?" He smiled even more and replied: "No. You look seventy-five."

Although I was immensely tickled, this was quite a knock to my ego. But hasn't Browning written:

So welcome each rebuff
That turns life's smoothness rough?

I only hope the roughening of my life's smoothness does not again take the form of a tremendous toss, driving home with too much of a rebuff Bunyan's lesson:

He that is down
Needs fear no fall!

Your house in Fargo with those two trees on either side makes my heart leap out to the place and jump into that upstairs window which looks like a third eye above the two windows below on either side of the door. The information that the house is 70 years old renders it just fit for the old bloke—and perhaps it has even the distinction of looking 5 years older than it is.

I am glad you are doing valuable work, meeting people who are searching for they-know-not-what. It is just such people who are future Aurobindonians. Settled religious folk may be good but they seem to have little chance of being better. It is usually the misty who become mystic. But here too there is some danger, for, as Chesterton once put it, mysticism for many people is no more than "misty schism"—a breaking away from traditional religion towards a kind of individual separative special inner view which does not bring union of seeking hearts but a break-up into exalted egos. All depends on the right turn which the misty ones take. It is there that the importance and significance of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother come in. God has been described in several modes of mistiness. A man once stated: "God is to me a red oblong blur." Somebody else said: "There is in us a God-shaped void." Still another definition runs: "God is an inexpressible sigh in the human heart." Tradi-

tional religion has tried to offer a seizable limited and unchanging concept of the Divine—and people, who are tired of looking far and far, grab this concrete consolation. But the genuine seekers cannot rest content—and yet they appreciate the truth behind the traditional religious phenomenon and would like to find something in which the far seems to come near and the immense to grow intimate, without giving up the sense of depth beyond depth which is the sign of the real infinite. It is the real infinite—vaster than all space and at the same time

The red immortal riding in the hearts of men—

that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother reveal and make living.

The typical modern mind is astir with a pull from the future and not simply with a push from the past or a pressure from the present. Progress along the line on which it has been moving is not enough for it. Something true that has not been found and cannot just be discovered by continuing on the path under our forceful feet is what is attracting the soul of today. The entire youth-unrest is a symptom of this strange perception. And a modern youth is there in every awakened man now, even if that man does not break out into the characteristic hippie strain. “A light that never was on sea or land” is the future dawn we are looking for—the “symbol dawn” of *Savitri*’s first canto. By bringing Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to the consciousness of people we shall put an end to their ambiguous aching.

But they must realise that their aching is ambiguous not only because they don’t rightly know whither they are heading: it is also due to their trying to cut away completely the present and the past. The evolutionary essence of all that has been done in days gone and all that is being attempted today has to remain. Indeed it cannot help remaining, but, while old forms and current trends have to be dropped in a great measure, the actuality behind them is to be intuited and sustained and drawn onward. Then alone what the future brings will be a fulfilment of the deepest *dharma*, the basic nature and law, of mind and life-force and matter, a natural and therefore lasting gain rather than a brilliant superimposition from the unknown Spirit, a superimposition which will ultimately fall away. The light that never was on sea or land is really what has never manifested in a fully recognisable hue, yet has always been the urge behind every light that sea or land has so far known. The first canto of *Savitri* figures “the symbol dawn” as what has mysteriously and magically glimmered in every dawn-movement but has never been able to stay long enough to make the whole day its varied manifestation. What is special to “the day when Satyavan must die” is basically the prolonged revelation of an aeonic secret in order to characterise the promise of a new era in human endeavour and achievement. The mark of the new era will be the coming fight between the cosmic god of Death and the human goddess of Love, human in shape and appearance but descended from the Supreme—the struggle between Yama, the universal darkness of Negation, and Savitri, the transcendent light of Transformation, over the body of Satyavan.

I am afraid I have let myself write on and on. Let me close this letter. I don't think you quite bargained for it when you spoke of "advice" and "suggestions". But you and your friend, who love us always, will not mind the inveterate lecturer being true to his "itch".

*

3. 7. 1975

Although I have been a little laggard in replying, I have kept on thinking of doing so. I wondered how I could answer properly your question on Manas, "Mind". I believe we have to look at Manas from two sides. On the one hand it is a developing consciousness. Here the sense-impacts and sense-impressions build it up. What is built up may be called the outer Manas. On the other hand is the inner or subliminal Manas which is already there, brought by the reincarnating soul after it has built up the subjective materials of its new life. It is this pre-existing Manas which is the "sixth-sense" differentiating itself into the various senses and capable of acting on its own to obtain the results got through them and even exercising its power beyond the range of information open to the physical senses. We as composite inner-outer personalities keep functioning with both the aspects of Manas.

Even when the outer, progressively formed Manas is in action, there is always the inner pre-existing Manas at work. For, how exactly is a sense-impression achieved in the wake of a sense-impact? The sense-impact, as observed by physics, only brings some vibration of the material world setting up, as physiological study tells us, a vibration in the nerves of our body. The latter gets translated into what we know as a sense-impression which is quite a different thing from all that has come in. A sight, a sound, a smell, a taste, a texture are experienced in place of a nerve-thrill. Yes, "experienced"—a fact of consciousness has occurred. How is this tremendous transformation to be explained?

According to Sri Aurobindo, the inner Manas, in answer to the touch of the sense-message on the outer Manas, goes forth and directly contacts the object from which the message has arrived. By a sort of perceptive intuition it acquires the awareness of one aspect or another of that object. Here is a straight experience of the object—unmediated by the sense-organs even though they served as the initial stimulus. Indeed, neither of the two vibrations concerned are experienced at all. Sight, sound, smell, taste, texture are our direct experience. The inner Manas has here acted as the sixth sense. But, under the conditions to which mind is subject in the body to a considerable extent, the direct action is concealed and it looks as if the outer Manas has somehow constructed the impression through the sense-organs. But what comes in at one end is entirely different from what comes out at the other and the two cannot be thought of as cause and effect. They belong to disparate planes. They can be related only in the way Sri Aurobindo explains. And this "occult" and "intuitive" functioning of Manas proves the constant activity of the subliminal Manas through the outer or rather along with it. Also, unless it acted as described by Sri Aurobindo

we could have no knowledge of outer physical reality, no reaching of objective fact. If we could feel anything it would be nothing more than varied vibrations of nerves and of matter outside the body.

Whatever is based on a study of objective fact—which means our day-to-day life and also all our scientific adventure—derives its authenticity from an experience beyond the mere senses and their organs. This is a paradox which the commonsense no-nonsense thinker and the practical proponent of scientific empiricism never realise. The materialistic philosophy would not have even the data on which it claims to build itself, could not even start on its sceptical career, without the previous functioning of its “mind”, its Manas, in a manner which it never dreams of and which reduces to absurdity the conclusions of that philosophy.

Wherever there is sense-experience—with or without the technically so-called nervous system—there is the supra-sensuous functioning of the subliminal Manas, for otherwise no perception of things as they are in the objective world can take place. If the amoeba has sense-experience, as I believe the fellow does, it must be a medium of the inner Manas’s intuitive process in however rudimentary an expression.

I don’t think the amoeba has the “buddhi”. The buddhi comes into operation only when the mental stage is evolved: it marks the beginning of the Purusha’s separation from Prakriti in even the outer being so that the consciousness can stand back and contemplate and judge and decide.

The line I quoted about love—

The red immortal riding in the hearts of men—

is not, as you surmise, from *Savitri*, though it has something of the *Savitri* tone and colour. It is an inspiration of James Elroy Flecker’s.

K. D. SETHNA

A PRAYER

By slow Beauty illumining human toil
Kindle in our eyes the look that changes Time.
Efface from our hearts the dull black streak of death,
And draw gold lines on the vast and silent dark
That we may see the paths where Thou hast dreamt
And woven through centuries a vigilant Peace.
In Silence where moonbeam faltering grows dim,
Pass Thou to our Selves that always knew of Light.
Since our unceasing minds, forever at labour,
Rear up, and in torpor of fitful sleep grow dull,
Step Thou with such muffled footfall as echoes
Only in the unvisited soul-sanctuary.
Match thus the forgotten memory of a past
When Thou nor we had cast the die of Time,
And Space had reeled oblivious of itself
In the nether void of a stark nothingness
Where non-being's pinions of boundlessness lay fast.
O ethereal Master, whose visage before my eyes
Floats as would a luminous shadow of Thee
In a still pool descending calm and white,
Grow more than a Face, be more than Wisdom's eyes,
And thrill miraculously every fibre of self,
Till body blinded with too great a joy
Cries out in perfect immobility
While rapture sweeps in blending harmonies,
"O Thou, to whom all things must turn for all!"

ARVIND HABBU

SRI AUROBINDO IN POLITICS

HIGH NOON OF HINDU NATIONALISM

(Continued from the issue of May 1981)

SRI Aurobindo's deep inner sense that the Independence Movement was nothing short of a holy crusade permeated those speeches in which he tried to imbue others with the same motivation and spirit of dedication that permeated his own life. He spoke to students at the Bengal National College in Calcutta in August 1907 with words designed to reach deep within and pull from their inner selves the vision of the Motherland that would generate the kind of dedication needed for the enormous task at hand:

What we want here is to build up sons for the Motherland to work and to suffer for Her.... I wish to see some of you becoming rich, rich not for yourselves but that you may enrich the Mother with your riches. I wish to see some of you becoming great, great not for your own sakes, not that you may satisfy your own vanity, but great for Her, to make India great, to enable Her to stand up with head erect among the nations of the earth.¹¹

Then, the strength and singularity of Sri Aurobindo's own vision received one of its finest expressions in the form of advice given with great depth of feeling:

There are times in a nation's history when Providence places before it one work, one aim, to which everything else, however high and noble in itself, has to be sacrificed. Such a time has now arrived for our Motherland when nothing is dearer than Her service, when everything else is to be directed to that end.... Train yourselves body and mind and soul for her service.... Work that She may prosper. Suffer that She may rejoice. All is contained in that one single advice.¹²

When the Nationalist ferment reached new heights in Bengal, Sri Aurobindo felt certain it was because the Bengalis had accepted Nationalism as a religious creed, and thus had received Divine strength and inspiration—no longer abandoning Shakti, Shakti had ceased to abandon them. Armed with increased conviction, Sri Aurobindo worked hard to spread Nationalism in this sense. In a speech on January 19, 1908, he told his Bombay audience what was happening in Bengal, and he roused their passion to join in and make it happen throughout the land:

There is a creed in India today which calls itself Nationalism, a creed which has come to you from Bengal. What is Nationalism? Nationalism is a religion

that has come from God; Nationalism is a creed which you shall have to live.... What is this that has happened in Bengal?... This thing is happening daily in Bengal, because, in Bengal, Nationalism has come to the people as a religion, and it has been accepted as a religion.... Nationalism survives in the strength of God and it is not possible to crush it, whatever weapons are brought against it.... Will you do as they do in Bengal? (Cries of "Yes!")¹³

We turn now from the spiritual passion and emotion that permeated much of Sri Aurobindo's speeches and writings of the period, for he was aware that a good portion of the group to whom he directed his appeal would not readily respond to a call in the name of religion. While he fervently believed the Nationalist Movement to be in God's hands, he therefore also recognized the need to use the rational, intellectual approach as well. Sri Aurobindo's political writings are thus replete with sophisticated allusions to the English literary tradition, for many who read his editorials in the English-language revolutionary journal *Bande Mataram* were of the educated middle class and were familiar with a wide variety of English works. Many of them also favored the ideals of British democracy and social reform, and, though they wanted self-rule, they were opposed to armed insurrection if only because they feared that widespread disorder would follow. In short, while in favor of national independence, they felt that Indians were not yet ready to govern themselves with justice and efficiency, and thus condoned continued British rule.

Sri Aurobindo's dislike of British hegemony apparently was intense enough to overrule any reservations he might have had about his program to expel the English by force. In any case, when he became convinced of the religious nature of the movement for independence, any possible reservations melted away. Even so, his written appeals in the name of reason and the lessons of history show that he did not abandon those individuals he knew were unimpressed with religious language; he therefore made use of his ability to talk to them on their own terms. In an editorial of September 22, 1907, he wrote of caste rigidity, one of the major concerns of the Moderates and other reformers:

The caste system was once productive of good, and as a fact has been a necessary phase of human progress through which all the civilizations of the world have had to pass. The autocratic form of government has similarly had its use in the development of the world's polity, for there was certainly a time when it was the only kind of political organization that made the preservation of society possible. The Nationalist does not quarrel with the past, but he insists on its transformation, the transformation of individual or class autocracy into the autocracy of the nation, of the fixed, hereditary, anti-democratic caste-organization into the pliable, self-adapting, democratic distribution of functions. In the present absolutism in politics and the present narrow caste-organization in society he finds a negation of that equality.... Indian Nationalism must by its inhe-

rent tendencies move towards the removal of unreasoning and arbitrary distinctions and inequalities.¹⁴

Then, as if to read the minds of reform-oriented Indians and Englishmen alike, he spoke to the anticipated objection before it could be made:

Ah! he will say, this is exactly what we Englishmen have been telling you all these years. You must get rid of your caste before you can have democracy. There is just a little flaw in this advice of the Anglo-Indian monitors, it puts the cart before the horse, and that is the reason we have always refused to act on it.¹⁵

In the same editorial, Sri Aurobindo also spoke to the issue of education from the Nationalist point of view:

Education on a national scale is an indispensable precondition of our social amelioration. And because education is impossible except through the aid of state-finance, therefore, even if there were no other reason, the Nationalist must emphasize the immediate need of political freedom without which Indians cannot obtain the necessary control over their money. So long as we are under an alien bureaucracy, we cannot have the funds needed for the purpose of an adequate national education, and what little we are given falls far short of the Nationalist ideal, being mainly concerned with the fostering of a spirit of sordid contentment with things that be.¹⁶

The essence of the Nationalist world view was then artfully distilled into one final poignant statement:

The Nationalist has been putting the main stress on the necessity of political freedom almost to the exclusion of the other needs of the nation, not because he is not alive to the vital importance of those needs of economic renovation, of education, of social transformation, but because he knows that in order that his ideal of equality may be brought to its fullest fruition, he must first bring about the political freedom and federation of his country.¹⁷

We have seen the two widely diverse approaches Sri Aurobindo utilized in his efforts to bring more Indians into the Nationalist fold—the call based upon a religious vision of India as a manifestation of the Divine Mother, as the spiritual light to the world, and the call aimed at the Western-educated reformers, where he argued that political freedom must precede a speedy and efficient march to reform. These two elements were combined in those instances where Sri Aurobindo's articulation of Hindu Nationalism revealed its greatest power and insight. For example, in another *Bande Mataram* editorial, he discussed the real meaning and basis of democracy and its relation to India's role in the world:

Now that democracy has returned to Asia...it will be purged of its foreign elements and restored to its original purity. The movements of the nineteenth century in India were European movements, they were coloured with the hues of the West. There was a strain of hatred and bitterness, which showed itself in the condemnation of Brahmanical priestcraft, the hostility to Hinduism and the ignorant breaking away from the hallowed traditions of the past. What was true and eternal in the past was likened to what was false or transitory, and the nation was in danger of losing its soul by an immense surrender to the aberrations of European materialism. Not in this spirit was India intended to receive the mighty opportunity which the impact of Europe gave her.

Her mission is to point back humanity to the true source of human liberty, human equality, human brotherhood. When man is free in spirit, all other freedom is at his command.... When he is liberated from delusion, he perceives the Divine equality of the world which fulfils itself through love and justice, and this perception transfuses itself into the law of government and society.¹⁸

Here, then, in words that ring equally true today, Sri Aurobindo asserted strongly that spiritual edification will translate itself into social equality and order beyond the fondest dream of reformers who think in terms of externally-defined programs. He continued, still speaking of mankind in general:

When he has perceived this Divine equality, he is brother to the whole world, and in whatever position he is placed he serves all men as his brothers by the law of love, by the law of justice. When this perception becomes the basis of religion, of philosophy, of social speculation and political aspiration, then will liberty, equality, and fraternity take their place in the structure of society.... This is the Asiatic reading of democracy which India must rediscover for herself before she can give it to the world.¹⁹

In sum, Sri Aurobindo was deeply committed to a vision of his nation as a spiritual beacon to the world, yet his vision was at the same time concrete and included ideas relating to education, finance, technology, and social equality. The movement for independence which peaked in the years 1905-1909 was guided by educated Indians including Sri Aurobindo and other Hindu Nationalists who accepted the scientific methods of the West, and who would apply them to the elucidation of all truth, including spiritual truth. In contrast to the predominantly secular nationalism of many reformers who were content to forget India's heritage, the strength of the Hindu Nationalist vision lay in the integration of social justice, scientific method, and mystical insight.

There was another kind of nationalism, endemic among the stolid masses, defined by xenophobic and punctilious observance of antediluvian social regulations. Sri Aurobindo referred to it frequently and noted that it fed upon base ideas inconsistent

with the essential spirit of Hinduism. This form of nationalism existed in tandem with superstitious Hinduism, and, in fact, related to modern nationalism in the same way as superstitious Hinduism related to the true spirit of Hinduism as expounded by Sri Aurobindo and others. There was always the possibility that the Nationalist cause would be taken up—on their own terms—by those very people who were motivated solely by fervent disdain for outsiders, and though this did happen to some degree, it seemed to be minimal during the 1905-1909 movement. Unfortunately, when it became active again under Gandhi in 1919-1921, the retrograde brand of nationalism wielded much greater influence, for although Gandhi sought a moral regeneration of the Indian people, he was opposed to modern civilization, and he called the British government “satanic.” This is hardly sufficient to explain the turn of events that characterized the non-cooperation movement under Gandhi’s leadership, but it is not our purpose to analyze that movement any further here. Suffice it to say that nationalism had a much stronger atavistic flavor in 1921 than it did in 1908.

In any event, when Sri Aurobindo was released from prison in May 1909, the Nationalist ferment had calmed almost to the point of complete cessation. Sri Aurobindo interpreted this as a Divine signal that the country needed a period of quiet introspection, and, after some few months, he himself retired to Pondicherry to pursue his own *sadhana*. If his conception of an Integral Hindu Nationalism was overruled by a different set of ideas in the 1920’s, this is not to say it was lost completely. Independent India is still growing and changing as it finds its place in the modern world, and Sri Aurobindo’s followers endeavor to manifest his ideals in the life of his Ashram and in Auroville, his double legacy.

(Concluded)

PAUL MUNDSCHENK

NOTES

¹¹ Sri Aurobindo, “Advice to National College Students,” in *Speeches* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1952), p. 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

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¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

¹⁸ Sri Aurobindo, “Asiatic Democracy,” *Bande Mataram*, March 22, 1908. In *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 99.

A GLIMPSE OF SRI AUROBINDO'S SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

SRI Aurobindo is one of the finest flowers of Indian culture and tradition. He is by far the most original and creative thinker. Though not an academic philosopher in the ordinary sense of the term, his numerous works both in prose and poetry mainly based on his yogic practices and intimate spiritual realisation contain precious ideas and thoughts having profound metaphysical significance. Consequently we have in Sri Aurobindo a most comprehensive and integral world-view. Sri Aurobindo's thought-current which greatly shaped his metaphysical creed moves mainly in the sphere of the Vedic and Upanishadic culture notwithstanding his thoroughly Western upbringing and education. Following Vedantic tradition he designates his philosophy 'The real Monism, the true Adwaita', wherein he has presented to the modern world a new philosophy of divine life which is undoubtedly thrilling and sublime. His integral philosophy is a happy synthesis of the spiritual and material life and also links the demands of the society with the claims of the individual. As a prophet of life divine and a lover of humanity, he gives expression to his reflections on various social sciences and humanities, criticising their methods of investigation and contents and highlighting the narrowness of their perspectives. Some of Sri Aurobindo's social thoughts have found place in his monumental work *The Life Divine*; but *The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Human Unity* deal with the vital issues of man's socio-political development and examine all the fundamental problems which trouble a modern mind. To give an adequate account of his social philosophy would require more than one treatise and hence attention has to be paid here to some major aspects of his social thought, leaving aside those which are purely political.

Sri Aurobindo's social philosophy is an inalienable part of his Integral Non-dualism, and the theory of evolution along with Integral Yoga is the pivot round which his whole philosophy moves. But his conception of philosophy and of its method is not identical with recent notions. In order to appreciate the full significance of his social philosophy, it is of cardinal importance to give a *resumé* of his conception of philosophy. Philosophy, for Sri Aurobindo, is not a hard intellectual exercise or a fascinating frivolity of thought. It must be a philosophy of life. Since human life is a many-sided whole it must be viewed as a whole and hence philosophy should move for integration and unity of experience. In philosophy what seems to be most essential and what is lamentably lacking in the current philosophical enterprises is a systematic and synthetic handling of experience and by 'experience' he does not mean sensuous experience only. According to him, the standpoint of philosophy must be all-inclusive and synthetic, and truth must be multi-dimensional instead of being linear. That is why Sri Aurobindo recommends banishment of all barren intellectualism and extreme existential outlook. In his language, "Philosophy dealing with the principles of things must come to perceive the Principle of all these principles and investigate its nature, attributes and essential workings."¹ Philosophy, he admits, is

incapable of securing spiritual realisation but it is an indispensable aid to such realisation. K. D. Sethna has very beautifully elucidated the Aurobindonian conception of philosophy in the following way: "His philosophy is not abstract logic-spinning from a few principles of thought mixed with a few data of ordinary observation. It is only the intellectual elucidation and systematisation of concrete and direct experience of realities lying beyond the mere mind; it is but a mental picture of what is reached by the inmost consciousness in its Yogic penetration of the subliminal and supraliminal."² Sri Aurobindo's social philosophy should be studied in that perspective.

Sri Aurobindo's doctrine of evolution which is again the cornerstone of his metaphysics is mainly concerned with the future destiny of man upon earth. And the most characteristic feature of his evolutionism is that divine life is to be realised on earth itself. He, as we know, does not believe that the evolutionary process has reached its acme with the birth of human personality. Such an assumption amounts to falsification of the fundamental trend of the evolutionary wave. It is Sri Aurobindo's realisation that the time has come when the evolution will take a leap into the next higher stage, the stage of supermind. Sri Aurobindo's social thought is foreshadowed by his vision of Reality and his view of the meaning and destiny of man on earth. According to him, man and the universe are in their essential inner nature divine; they are modes of manifestation of the One, the Eternal. Behind the appearances stands the Supreme Reality in whom all beings are united. 'All this that we see is surely Brahman, *Sarvam khalvidam brahma*'—so goes the Upanishadic dictum. Each individual self is essentially a unique focus and dynamic centre of the Absolute Reality, a centre of celestial light. But man as depicted in different social sciences is nothing more than a social individual, 'a social animal' as Aristotle put it. A social individual is a vital-mental being who enters into varied relationships for ensuring self-protection, gratification of sex-desire, enjoyment of material goods and comforts of life, physical growth and mental development. A good number of social scientists believe that an individual is dependent on society for the full realisation of the ends of his existence, full exercise of his personal freedom and harmonious development of his personality.

Society, as Gisbert defines it, is a "collection of individuals held together by certain enduring relationships in the pursuance of common ends" and, in view of its dynamic nature, society is the changing pattern of social relationship. Gisbert further adds: "Reciprocal recognition, direct and indirect, and commonness are the characteristic features of every social relationship."³ The relation of the individual and society is no doubt the central problem of Sociology and Social Philosophy and in view of its paramount importance Social Scientists have advanced many theories to give a meaningful account of this relation.

Sri Aurobindo also recognises the supreme importance of this problem which therefore receives his close attention and he offers a sound solution in keeping with his Integral Adwaita. Following the Upanishadic tradition, he conceives man as a spiritual individual, a being and self-expression of the Absolute. In addition to his psycho-biological complex, man has an inner and abiding psychic entity called the soul, by the

centring of which his body, life and mind are organised into an individual entity. Individuality in its sociological reference connotes the 'capacity of independence of judgment, some initiative, some discrimination and also strength of character.'⁴ Owing to the narrow perspective and limitations of methodology, Social Sciences concentrate on external data, economic factors, changing institutions and events and consequently miss to perceive the spiritual dimension of the individual, the aim towards which humanity is moving and the power that moves it.

In chapters 5 to 7 of *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo presents an illuminating picture of the precise nature and status of the individual. He is emphatic as regards the importance of the individual in the world-process since he must play the most vital role in ushering in a new era of divine life upon earth through a radical transformation of his consciousness. It is the purpose of evolutionary Nature to effect a total spiritual transformation of the individual through his emancipation from ignorance and inconscience. In his essential nature, man is a spiritual and evolutionary being and certainly not an epiphenomenon of matter nor a mere social animal. He occupies a transitional status and "the intermediate position of man in the world-evolution is therefore in reality a central one; and not only is his function essential, but—as we have seen—something of the human person is never to be obliterated altogether: the human self is subsumed in the higher unity of the Supreme Self."⁵

The fundamental social problem is that of harmony between individual and society. Sri Aurobindo addresses himself to this problem and examines it in the broader perspective of spiritual evolution and here also his approach is thoroughly synthetic. In the history of Social Sciences, there is a constant wavering of interest, a shifting of emphasis between Individual and Society. Sometimes the utmost emphasis is laid on individual and sometimes on the 'Organised Collective Whole' or sometimes on the 'right and balanced relation between the two.' As a result, we have a host of theories advocated by many thinkers over many centuries. The mechanical theory in its various ramifications regards society as an artificial aggregate and constructed order which has been called into existence to serve certain interests of the individual. According to some prominent social philosophers of the West, such as Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, the primitive man in the remotest past lived 'free and equal' in a supposed state of Nature and later, under pressure of some external circumstances and not due to any inherent impulsion, they formed into an association by voluntary curtailment of certain rights and privileges. Society is an 'artificial device of mutual economy': this is the view suggested by Adam Smith. These theories in some form or other emphasize the fact that Society came into existence as a result of some 'Original Contract' and by implication suggest the primary importance of the individual with reference to Society. Modern democracies are undoubtedly dominated by the individualistic outlook. This individualistic tendency is responsible for the emergence of the current school of Existentialism which has erected an ego-centric philosophy. Sri Aurobindo, however, maintains that man is essentially gregarious and society is a primal necessity especially for his survival. The social contract theorists with indivi-

dualistic inclination expound that since society has no independent life, truth and value of its own, it should not be allowed to function beyond the preservation of internal order and cohesion and protection of the members from internal disorder and external aggression. Society is for the individual and not *vice versa*. To Sri Aurobindo, this appeared to be a one-sided and ill-accorded solution.

The Organic conception of society is just the reverse of the earlier one. By putting exclusive emphasis on the organised collective whole (society) this view regards individuals as inseparable and interrelated factors in the life of the society, having no existence apart from the social whole. Sri Aurobindo summarises this view in the following way: "The Individual has to live for the society or for mankind, or even, he is only a cell of the society, he has no other use or purpose of birth, no other meaning of his presence in Nature, no other function."⁶ In other words, the highest fulfilment of the individual's life consists in complete self-identification of the society to which he belongs, a total self-effacement or self-immolation in the greater interests of the society. In ancient Sparta and in Totalitarian society of both marxist and fascist brands, this outlook is very much in evidence. He unequivocally expresses his opposition to the collectivists' contention that individuals are like cells in a living organism, though he admits that individual minds depend upon social surroundings and traditions for their growth. In his opinion, a total regimentation of man's social existence by ruthlessly suppressing and immobilising the free and full growth of inner potentialities of an individual will prove menacing. Sri Aurobindo therefore rightly observes: "To have the principle or rule of another nature imposed upon it by force or a de-individualising pressure is a menace to his existence, a wound to its being, a fetter upon its march."⁷ It is surely misleading to assert that we belong to society as the cells belong to the body. Indeed society can have little meaning and will be nothing more than a sheer abstraction unless individuals themselves are real.

Another very facile attempt is also made by some social thinkers to explain this relation by showing an interdependence between the individual and the social whole. But this attempted solution is equally unsatisfactory in view of its superficial and imprecise character and also for the reason that it gives no idea about the goal either of the individual or of the society. Sri Aurobindo goes to the root of the problem and advances a spiritual solution which is quite consistent with experience and coherent with reason. Nevertheless, he recognises the relative merits contained in different theories formulated on the basis of mental consciousness and these are valid within certain limits. But when these limits are overstepped, the theories cease to be relevant and fruitful, for the truth of any theory is determined by its coherence and comprehensiveness in the entire scheme of the world.

Sri Aurobindo envisages a manifestation of the Supreme Reality in humanity and society as well as in the individual. For him, humanity, community and the individual are formations of the Reality, yet in view of his spiritual nature and the role he is to play in the future evolution, the individual has undisputed priority over the collectivity. In Sri Aurobindo's eloquent words: "He is not confined within the

community; although his mind and life are, in a way, part of the communal mind and life, there is something in him that can go beyond them,"⁸ for, according to him, "collectivity is largely a sub-conscious mass movement" and obviously therefore "less evolved than the consciousness of its most developed individual."⁹ So he suggests that the individual must move towards perfection, *i.e.*, realisation of his inner essence which is the purpose of the evolutionary Nature, and the more he develops the more he transcends the limitations of all collective formations. Evidently, therefore, an individual can subsist even without the support of the collective whole, at least as regards the essential perfection of the spirit: in other words, "he can spiritually exist and find his own reality and indwelling self of being,"¹⁰ though he can achieve a complete material living only within the society or community. The individual is thus the central figure of Sri Aurobindo's social thinking and he observes: "The individual does not owe his ultimate allegiance either to the State... or to the community... his allegiance must be to the Truth, the Self, the Spirit, the Divine which is in him and in all."¹¹ But this is the ideal of the highest stage. So long as a man is underdeveloped he must follow the rules of society. As he develops, he becomes more and more free, he attains spiritual freedom based on the truth of the unity of all being in Reality. And individual freedom is not opposed to collective good and interests; on the contrary, it makes room for collective freedom. In Sri Aurobindo's intuition the real development of the society depends upon the full and perfect development of the individuals. In his language: "A perfected community also can exist only by the perfection of its individuals, and perfection can come only by the discovery and affirmation in life by each of his own spiritual being and the discovery by all of their spiritual unity and a resultant life unity."¹²

The relation between the individual and the state, which is a corollary problem of the relation of the individual to society, may be viewed in the light of the illuminating thoughts as outlined above. The state is mainly organised for the purpose of securing the good of the collectivity and is believed to represent the wisdom of the community. By making a correct appraisal, Sri Aurobindo holds that the state is in fact an embodiment of 'collective egoism' usually controlled by a few selfish and incompetent politicians and hence can never be an end in itself. "For the state is not an organism, it is a machinery and it works like a machine without tact, taste, delicacy or intuition. It tries to manufacture, but what humanity is here to do is to grow and create."¹³ Unlike the individual, the state is without a soul, it is only a military, political and economic organisation which practically serves the interests of a section of the community and not the whole of it. Thus the claim that it is the best means of human progress is nothing more than a gross exaggeration and a myth. As a matter of fact, the state does not favour individual initiative and freedom and growth of the community, it creates its godhead and demands from the individual members total allegiance and unreserved self-surrender to the political Deity. But it is, as Sri Aurobindo holds, nothing but 'collective egoism' developed at the cost of individuals, which in the long run creates disorder and misunderstanding in the sphere of inter-

national relations either by its militant nationalism or by its ideological expansionism. Further, the state, in order to bring the incalculable complexities of life within a manageable limit and to secure the social well-being of the collective human life, devises various means of uniformity in social, economic and political opportunities through the uniformity of culture and perfected organised administration. "The state tends always to uniformity, because uniformity is easy to it; but uniformity is death, not life. It is the energy of the individual which is really the effective agent of collective progress. The claim of the state to the sole right of directing a nation's energies is an unnatural violence to the spirit in man and to the truth of life."¹⁴

Evidently uniformity is not identical with true unity and true unity can develop and flower only when there is a perfect realisation of oneness of existence of all beings and such 'real spiritual and psychological unity can allow a free diversity.' It is rich harmony and not colourless uniformity. This makes it impressively clear that Sri Aurobindo has no sympathy for the state that makes a mockery of individual freedom, democratic norms and ethical values and whose only ideal is material comfort in terms of economic prosperity. Though there is no direct reference to either Communism, Nazism or Fascism in *The Life Divine*, *The Human Cycle* does contain explicit reference to all these. In the latter treatise, he closely examines these doctrines and shows how individual freedom is subverted and cherished values are thrown away by employing a subtle strategy. In the countries where these socio-political ideologies receive state patronage, there is not a vestige of political liberty, not to speak of other liberties, and all thoughts are steam-rolled into conformity with the party line. In short, a strategic move is made to politicalise an individual but an extreme politicalisation has a dehumanizing effect leading to dangerous debasement and degradation. Further, such a move is the reversal of the evolutionary movement inasmuch as it is not a progressive process towards superconscience. The democratic solution in which the individual voluntarily subordinates his ego to the community is equally unsatisfactory. It works by means of social machinery and by education of the individual's social sense. "But it has not been found in experience... that education and intellectual training by itself can change man."¹⁵ Sri Aurobindo's solution consists in constructive refashioning of life by spiritual enlightenment. "It is only the full emergence of the soul, the full descent of the native light and power of the Spirit and the consequent replacement or transformation and uplifting of our insufficient mental and vital nature by a spiritual and supramental supernature that can effect this evolutionary miracle."¹⁶

(To be continued)

RANJIT KUMAR ACHARJEE

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THE RIVER: LATE SUMMER

THE river breathes
 like a spent alcoholic
 crawling into
 the dark interior of the night.

And then,
 lightning bursts:
 a tangle of wiry brilliance
 etching a dream
 on her dark bosom.

Beyond the sandbanks
 the vague hills:
 clots, when darkness bled;
 immobile, frigid...

Doodles of light
 scorch the immortal sky.
 The thunder scuttles across.

And the inimitable graph
 of destiny
 sags seaward.

SANKARAN KUTTY

THE SECRET OF THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

AN AUROBINDONIAN APPROACH

(Continued from the issue of May 1981)

AFTER the churning has produced all this, *kālakūṭa* appears. It will be recalled that Nārāyaṇa had told the gods to continue churning the milky ocean even after various gems had been obtained till amṛita would appear. They, however, have gone on even though the nectar has been obtained. This violation of the divine ordinance, which is clearly brought out in the original as *atinirmathanadeva* (“excessive churning”, not translated by Prof. Lal in 18.42), results in this world-destroying poison appearing. Like smoky fire it envelops the earth and the three worlds reel with the deadly fumes till, at Brahmā’s request, *mantramūrti mahēśvaraḥ* (Maheśwara-Śiva in his mantric form) drinks it up and holds it in his throat, which turns blue, whence he is called *Nilakanṭha*. The poison is the force of destruction, *pralaya*, which lies at the bottom of the ocean of the subconsciousness or the inconscient, and is the very obverse of amṛita. Shiva, in the Purāṇic trinity, is the centrifugal inertia of *Tamas* tending towards dispersion just as Viṣṇu is the centripetal ascending force of *Sattva* and Brahmā the dynamic revolving and ever-expanding *Rajas*.⁵⁷ Hence we find this symbol of the forces of destruction harnessed by Shiva who unites in himself the extremes of negation and affirmation, for all-destroying Rudra is also the munificent boon-dispenser, Shiva the benevolent.

Chapter 17 of the Gītā, speaking of the various *guṇas*, provides yet another insight into this particular symbol. The search of the sattvic nature is for the happiness of the psyche, which is a condition of abiding tranquillity, resulting from the flowering forth of all that is best within the being. The problem is that this is not a normal condition, and to possess that state of being involves a veritable churning out of all that is worst in us:⁵⁸

It has to be conquered by self-discipline, a labour of the soul, a high and arduous endeavour. At first this means much loss of habitual pleasure, much suffering and struggle, a poison born of the churning of our nature, a painful conflict of forces, much revolt and opposition to the change due to the ill-will of the members or the insistence of vital movements, but in the end the nectar of immortality rises in the place of this bitterness and as we climb to the higher spiritual nature we come to the end of sorrow, the euthanasia of grief and pain [and proceed beyond that to] that spiritual joy [which] is no longer the sattvic happiness, *sukham*, but the absolute Ananda. Ananda is the secret delight from which all things are born, by which all is sustained in existence and to which all can rise in the spiritual culmination. Only then can it be possessed when the liberated man, free from ego and its desires, lives at last one with his highest self, one with all beings and one with God in an absolute bliss of the spirit.

Approaching the symbol from the viewpoint of Tantra we obtain another revelation of esoteric meaning:⁵⁹

There is a secret fire at the base of the human system. It is a fire as invoked by the Vedic Rishis: the tantriks view it as a coiled python—the universal nature-power, her massive ingathered creative energy. This energy is forceful and fierce because it is as much creative as it is destructive. That is the poison which the python carries, it is a poison in the ignorant state and unconsciousness, to the ignorant and the unconscious, but to the aspirant and the awakened and the luminous consciousness it begins to work as the immortalising draught—nectar.... The fire in fact is the aspiration in the body, the divine demand in the body and it kindles itself by its own self-pressure. The spreading of the *barhi* (seat) in the Vedic image means also the surrender and submission, the prostration of the bodily being. By *namas*, by constant obeisance the fire is to be tended; and a ceaseless refuelling has to be done by a ceaseless self-offering of all movements, especially all the automatic reactions of the physical that form the roots of the material existence.

It is, however, interesting that Vyāsa does not use the name “Śiva” here, but prefers “Maheśwara”, denoting “the great lord”. This shows that he is not circumscribing his concepts within the Purāṇic triad but is harking back to the Vedic Puruṣa whose out-breathing is creation and whose in-breathing is dissolution.

The *Nilakanṭha* symbol has been interpreted very clearly by Nolini Kanta Gupta as a representation of “divine disgust”. He explains:⁶⁰

It is a “disgust” filled with all compassion. It is something which takes upon itself the wrong vibration in others to cure them. Instead of throwing a wrong movement back upon the wrong doer in a spirit of cold justice, it draws it within itself, absorbs it in order to eliminate it or transform it, reducing as much as possible its material consequences.... Precisely because the obscure vibrations are transformed into vibrations of light in the divine consciousness...the Divine takes upon and within himself all the ills of the world.

Another approach to this symbol is through the *Nilarudra Upaniṣad*, whose second and third slokas state:⁶¹

Fierce he came down from the sky, he stood facing me on the earth as its lord; the people behold a mass of strength, azure-throated, scarlet-hued. This that cometh is he that destroyeth evil, Rudra the Terrible, born of the tree that dwelleth in the waters; let the globe of the storm-winds come too, that destroyeth for thee all things of evil omen.

In the churning-myth, too, it is the world-tree-like Mandāra which rises from the

waters and leads to the appearance of Maheśvara. The tree mentioned here is the Upaniśadic *āsvattha*, “the Yogic emblem of the manifested world, as in the Gītā, the tree of the two birds in the Śwetāśwatara Upaniśad, the single tree in the blue expanse of the Song of Liberation. The *jala* is the *apaḥ* or waters from which the world rises....”⁶² Rudra here manifests as the Divine Wrath or Might, appearing “as a mass of brilliance, scarlet-ringed and crested with blue, the scarlet in Yoga denoting violent passion of anger or desire, the blue *śraddhā*, *bhakti*, piety or religion.”⁶³

All in all, the meaning which Vyāsa seems to be wanting to convey through this mini-myth of Śiva saving the three worlds by drinking the poison can be summed up, in terms of the pilgrimage of the Aryan soul towards the supreme heights of Consciousness-Truth-Bliss, as “None can reach heaven who has not passed through hell.”⁶⁴ This particular experience is undergone by the aspirant before he enters the supernal realms of Light and Bliss and the poison of Ignorance and Nescience rises out of the depths of his being:

All the fierce bale with which the world is racked
Is mixed in the foaming chalice of man’s heart....⁶⁵

This happens when

In Night he plunged to know her dreadful heart,
In Hell he sought the root and cause of Hell.
Its anguished gulfs opened in his own breast;...
He drank her poison draughts till none was left....⁶⁶

When he has plumbed the very depths of this Night,

He saw in Night the Eternal’s shadowy veil,
Knew death for a cellar of the house of life,
In destruction felt creation’s hasty pace,
Knew loss as the price of a celestial gain
And hell as a short cut to heaven’s gates.⁶⁷

Once this has happened, there is an end to the reign of the Lords of Ignorance over the consciousness; the inert hill of being throbs with sentience:

Then in Illusion’s occult factory
And in the Inconscient’s magic printing house
Torn were the formats of the primal Night
And shattered the stereotypes of Ignorance....
He imposed upon dark atom and dumb mass
The diamond script of the Imperishable....
And traced on the awake exultant cells

In the ideographs of the Ineffable
 The lyric of the love that waits through Time
 And the mystic volume of the Book of Bliss
 And the message of the superconscient Fire....
 The soul lit the conscious body with its ray,
 Matter and Spirit mingled and were one.⁶⁸

The Titans, bewildered by these happenings, seek to hit back and retain amṛita and obtain Lakṣmī for themselves. At this stage Nārāyaṇa again steps in, as at every critical point in this myth (how to obtain amṛita; how to uproot and support Mandāra; how to get the energy to continue the churning). He appears in the form of a ravishing woman through his maya and deludes the Titans into surrendering the amṛita. What is this *māyā*? Purani has analysed the meaning of this word in the Ṛigveda which is quite distinct from the sense in which it is used by Shankaracharya. Coming from the root *mā* ("to measure, to fashion"), it seems "power of formation, power that measures out the infinite in infinite forms of matter, life and mind, etc." Purani continues;⁶⁹

The Veda while admitting *Māyā* as a positive power does not accept the idea of illusion or unreality in the word. It lays down that the false and dark formation and creations of *Māyā* of the undivine forces should be destroyed and replaced by the right and illumined formations of the divine Power, the Devas.... The Vedic seers constantly aspire for the birth of the Godhead in man, for the increase and manifestation of the divine Nature which is the Divine *Māyā*.

This is precisely what Nārāyaṇa's Mohinīmūrti signifies.

To attempt a consolidated view of the symbolic significance of the *amṛitamantana* myth, we can say that the basic "story" remains that of the Uttanka-Upamanyu-Uddālaka narratives, namely the effort of the human being to attain to the highest spheres of spiritual enlightenment. His progress is represented symbolically in the shape of myths analogous to the Ṛigvedic symbol-matrix exemplified in the Aṅgīrasa myth. In this particular instance, however, the accent is on the churning out of Delight or Bliss from the being at all its levels, starting with the most inert one of the physical being which is symbolised by the mountain (*adri*). Here the Vedic analogue is that of Soma-extraction by the pressure of the stone on the substance so that the juice runs out into the *kalasa/samudra*. As in the Veda, the amṛita/Soma is described as rising up from below the depths of the ocean to vivify and strengthen the luminous consciousness symbolised by Indra and the other gods in their battle against the Dānavas and Dasyus, lords of ignorance and the nether darkness.

The emphasis on the churning image presents an extremely important feature of Vedic mysticism which is reiterated in Upaniṣadic philosophy. The concept, which is best stated in Ṛigveda I.19.7, is that *chalanam*, movement is essential for progress of any type. In this particular ṛik, it is the Maruts who shake the waters containing all

that is necessary for the development of the being out of their inertia. Thereby the dormant potentialities are churned out with the help of the aspirant's *tapas*. In the same *ṛik* the Maruts are referred to as those who easily move the mountain, that is the inert and impervious physical structure in whose caves of sub-conscience lie dormant manifold potentialities, awaiting liberation.⁷⁰

The Kena Upaniṣad refers to the same idea when it celebrates the importance of *kṣobha*, disturbance:

If there is no movement of the conscious being, it can only know its own pure static existence. Without vibration or movement of being in consciousness there can be no act of knowledge and therefore no sense; without vibration or movement of being in force there can be no object of sense. Movement of conscious being as knowledge becoming sensible of itself as movement of force, in other words the knowledge separating itself from its own working to watch that and take it into itself again by feeling,—this is the basis of universal Sañjñāna.⁷¹

Where the mystic lore of the Veda is concerned, this churning symbol is applied most typically to the birth of the Mystic Fire, Agni. For instance, in III. 23.1:⁷²

Churned out and well-established in the house of his session, the Youth, the Seer, the leader of the pilgrim-sacrifice, imperishable in the perishing woodlands, the Fire, the knower of all thing born, has founded here immortality.

More significant, for the amṛita-manthana symbolism, is III.29:⁷³

Churn out, O men, the seer who creates no duality, the immortal thinker and knower with his fair front; Fire who is the supreme intuition in the sacrifice, the blissful one, bring to birth in your front, O Men. (*ṛik* 5) When they churn him out by the strength of their arms wide he shines, he is like a horse of swiftness, he is luminous in the woodlands; he is like a richly hued chariot in the journeying of the two riders, none can impede him; burning around the rocks he tears the grasses. (*ṛik* 6) Agni when he is born shines waking to knowledge, he is the Horse, the illumined who is declared by the seers, the great giver, whom the gods have set in the pilgrim-sacrifices as the carrier of the offerings, the one to be prayed, the omniscient. (*ṛik* 7)

Churned out with the good churning the seer set within with a perfect placing,—O Fire, make easy the paths of the sacrifice, offer sacrifice to the gods for the seeker of godhead. (*ṛik* 12)

Fighting down the unfriendly powers like the marching hosts of the life-gods the first-born of the Word come to know all that is: the Kuśikas have sent forth the luminous word, one by one they have kindled the Fire in the house. (*ṛik* 15)

Because here today in the going forward of this sacrifice, we have chosen thee, O Priest of the call, O thou who wakest to knowledge, thou hast moved

to the Permanent, thou hast achieved by the toil the Permanent; knowing come as one possessed of knowledge to the Soma-wine. (ṛik 16)

There is the same attainment of immortality here which forms the theme of Vyāsa's myth, with the difference that the product of the churning is Agni (Uchchaiḥśravas in Vyāsa) who is the pathfinder on this journey to the Permanent. The process has been well explained by Kapali Sastry:⁷⁴

The initiation starts with the Word churned out of the tapas-force generally transmitted by an adept to the Initiate or possibly by the Initiate himself discovering the word of Truth of his tapasyā, or by the favour and help of the Divine Powers in response to his intense call and fervent prayer. It is the Word that brings the initial awakening of the soul to the awareness of a higher Power, a deeper presence within him. And when by the Word, by the Name, the Immortal element becomes settled, the Initiate gradually hands over the charge of his self-discipline to the Mystic Fire who determines the road and steps to be traversed and carries him safe through openings to the radiant realms of Truth-Force, Truth-Consciousness and Truth-Light. He builds the planes of his being, opens the closed centres that are linked to the Cosmic planes, confers on him Truth-vision and Truth-audition, and whatever means is necessary. He grants him knowledge, power of concentration and through all this, He reaches him to the immortal life, the undying Light, to the Sun-World which is the plenary Home of Truth.

In Vyāsa's myth it is the gradual evolution of the psyche towards this ultimate goal which is portrayed, the various levels being shown as the different products arising out of the churning. The Ṛigvedic motifs of *go*, *aśva*, *adri*, *agni*, *soma*, *Indra*, *vajra*, *vṛṣabha*, *samudra/kalasa*, all figure prominently within the Puranic structure of the Trinity and the deva-asura conflict. The esoteric meaning remaining the same basically, despite the apparently metamorphosed exoteric sense. It is quite clear that the *samudra* being churned is the Vedic *antaḥ-samudra*,⁷⁵ the heart-ocean which is the inner existence to which the initiate gains access through askesis and carries out his pilgrimage from the depths of the being up to the sublime heights of enlightenment with the help of the Gods who nourish him through his offerings of all that he is to them. The Gods incarnate in him and replace his mortality with the Supreme's permanence. This concept of Agni's working within the individual being, and rising through successive planes of consciousness and being is best explained in the words of a modern seer-poet:

Above the spirit cased in mortal sense
Are superconscious realms of heavenly peace,
Below, the Inconscient's sullen dim abyss,

Between, behind our life, the deathless Rose....

Out of the sorrow and darkness of the world,
 Out of the depths where life and thought are tombed,
 Lonely mounts up to heaven the deathless Flame.
 In a veiled Nature's hallowed secrecies
 It burns for ever on the altar Mind,
 Its priests the souls of dedicated gods,
 Humanity its house of sacrifice.
 Once kindled never can its flamings cease.
 A fire along the mystic paths of earth,
 It rises through the mortal's hemisphere,
 Till borne by runners of the Day and Dusk
 It enters the occult eternal Light
 And clammers whitening to the invisible Throne.
 Its worlds are steps of an ascending Force:
 A dream of giant contours, titan lines,
 Homes of unfallen and illumined Might,
 Heavens of unchanging Good pure and unborn,
 Heights of the grandeur of Truth's ageless ray,
 As in a symbol sky they start to view
 And call our souls into a vaster air,
 On their summits they bear up the sleepless Flame;
 Dreaming of a mysterious Beyond,
 Transcendent of the paths of Fate and Time,
 They point above themselves with index-peaks
 Through a pale-sapphire ether of God-mind
 Towards some gold Infinite's apocalypse.
 A thunder rolling mid the hills of God,
 Tireless, severe is their tremendous voice:
 Exceeding us, to exceed ourselves they call
 And bid us rise incessantly above.

(*Savitri* II.12.p.277, 279-280)

From this passage by Sri Aurobindo it will be clear why the mountain-symbol is used for the rising planes of consciousness, for this is how it appears to the seer's vision. The great roar emerging from Mandara/the ocean during the churning is also explained here, along with the significance of the ritual *yajña*.

(*To be continued*)

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

NOTES

- ⁵⁷ Danielou: *op. cit.*, p. 190.
⁵⁸ Sri Aurobindo: *Essays on the Gita*, p. 488.
⁵⁹ Nolini Kanta Gupta: *Collected Works* Vol. 4, p. 326-27.
⁶⁰ Nolini Kanta Gupta: *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 339.
⁶¹ Sri Aurobindo: *The Upanishads*, *op. cit.*, p. 422
⁶² *Ibid.*
⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 423.
⁶⁴ *Savitri*, *op. cit.*, II, 8, p. 227.
⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 226.
⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 230.
⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 231.
⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 232.
⁶⁹ Purani: *Studies in Vedic Interpretation*, *op. cit.*, p. 227-28.
⁷⁰ Pandit: *Aditi*, *op. cit.*, p. 129-130. The entire chapter on the Maruts deserves close study as it reveals extremely interesting Vedic parallels to the churning myth
⁷¹ Sri Aurobindo: *The Upanishads*, *op. cit.*, p. 196.
⁷² *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, p. 146
⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 156-58.
⁷⁴ *Lights on the Ancients*, p. 50-51.
⁷⁵ Kapali Sastry, *Further Lights on Veda*, pp. 33, 35.

THE MOTHER OF THE UNBORN

BRILLIANT arms of sunlight flaming vast
 Into the unknown's unrealised distances
 Of God-delight and God's supernal love,
 She comes forth superseding the ancient roots.
 She brings to life the thrill of creative winds
 And storm-swift passions of unbarriered bliss
 And dazzling wonder-mights that know no end.
 Ygdrasil of the dumb ancient dreams
 Lives not in her, the slow mythical fires
 That burned in the minds and lives of men and gods;
 Instead she comes a whirlwind of white surprise
 From dangerous heights leaning with massive stress
 And blinding flares antheming her giant strides
 From the Unconceivable to the Unconned,
 Creating in her passage the stars unborn
 And revealing suns lost in unreachable skies.
 She comes, she sweeps, she lives in the world of Time
 To rouse the towering seed and the Future's face!

ROMEN

THE LORD OF HORSES

A NOVELLA

(Continued from the issue of May 1981)

5

So, I continued on my journey all alone. And to inspire myself I recollected a song that Mohammed-bin-Moktar used to sing during his wanderings in the desert:

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.

I had launched in quest of the tarpans. What colour would they be? Red, green or blue? Or white like my father, Drinker of Air, and like my brother, Safi the Pure? Or maybe black like my gentle and valiant mother, Daughter of the Wind? And amongst them, would there be a horse called Lord of Horses?

All sorts of questions cropped up in my head and kept me busy.

The countries I crossed were arid and did not inspire reveries. Chains of mountains towered all around me, huge rocks protruded here and there. Then came the vast barren valleys and dry grass.

One day, as I wandered I saw a lake at a distance. Eagerly I rushed towards it, certain that the water would at last quench my thirst. And how cool my legs would feel with the water around them! And I would go down into the water up to my chest, refresh my flanks, perhaps even roll in it. And my hair that now no one groomed and that had become rough and shaggy, particularly at the croup, would glisten once again.

Merrily, I galloped towards the lake which looked like an oval mirror that somebody had placed in front of me. I tasted the water. But the water was salty, and disgustedly I spat it out and gave up the idea of taking a bath.

Bent over the salt-water lake I contemplated my image. I had changed, I had become skinny and in my large golden eyes, eyes that were like dates, there was anguish. And my forehead was emaciated and become a dull grey colour. Where was Saïd, the Lord of Horses? Where was the artist who caracoled and jumped in the air with all fours? The stallion who was so well-groomed that his robe shimmered like the blade of a dagger? Where was that sprightly Saïd whom his Master led in the early morning to the banks of an oued or a fountain? In running away from men, I had run

away from water and from happiness.

For a moment I was sad and I lay down beside the accursed lake. Above me, the vultures circled in the sky. And the silence resounded with their raucous cries.

Then night came. I renounced the idea of continuing my journey any further and gave myself up to sleep. Sadness and fatigue so mingled that I had a nightmare. I dreamt that Daughter of the Wind had allowed me to suck her. I bent down to feed from her breast and oh! what a blight! Her milk was brackish and undrinkable.

I woke up with a start and felt very sad to know that I was groaning. I was groaning as if for the first time I had really understood that I was lonely.

It was night still. The moon was round and full as it had been on the night of my birth. And the stars traced long luminous jets in the sky. And that was comforting. I got up and started snorting. I must start moving, I told myself. The tarpans must not be too far now.

This thought had hardly entered my head when night began to palpitate and to move. My ears perked up and I strained to catch a sound. The sound was still a little muffled. But all my senses told me that the sound was approaching. I was in a state of shock, of eager expectation. It was the huddled, lusty, tempestuous noise of a stampede. The tarpans. The tarpans. They were coming at last.

They emerged from the mountains that lay in front of me beyond the salty lake. It was at first a confused mass, a sort of a mad billow. I could not distinguish the heads or the chests or even the legs. And then the wave broke up, broke up into many waves. I saw manes, I saw the tails and the coats. And the coats looked all alike, a wood-brown under moonlight.

Immobile and nervous, I waited. Had one of the tarpans seen me? It seemed to me they had slowed down their course. In the darkness I saw the eyes shine, the nostrils quiver. Yes, they were slowing down. Some of them had fallen to a trot and some to a short compact gallop. They had seen me all right. I raised my neck and scratched the ground with my right hindleg.

"Salaam," I said. "Salaam to you, my cousins. Salaam to you, O free tarpans."

By way of an answer, the company encircled me.

"Salaam," I repeated. "I have crossed so many countries to come to you. And I have crossed the Great Desert. In the Great Desert, the two wise men told me about you."

"Welcome to you who are sent by the two wise men of the Great Desert," greeted the plumpiest of the tarpans. "But tell me, what is your name, grey horse?"

"I am Saïd," I answered, "Saïd, the Lord of Horses. My father was Drinker of Air and my mother was Daughter of the Wind. My Master was murdered by Abou-af-the-Terrible. And I killed Abouaf, my Master's murderer. It was then that I decided to leave the company of men. Because no man was worthy enough to take my Master's place."

"I am Mitia," answered the plumpiest of the tarpans. "Mitia Kuzmitch, the seniormost of the tarpans. And with joy I welcome you in our midst. However, I

must warn you of one thing.”

“Speak out,” I said.

“We will not call you Saïd. For us there is no Lord amongst free horses. We are all equal. We live democratically.”

“It is men,” another tarpan decreed with a malicious smile, “it is men who have invented Lords.”

“They are so bored with themselves, these men,” sighed Mitia.

“Fine,” I said containing my anger. “You call me what you please.”

“I appreciate your docility,” said Mitia. “Come then: we will lead you to our valley where you will find water. You must be dying of thirst beside this salty lake.”

“Indeed, yes. I have not tasted water since yesterday.”

Compassion gleamed in the democratic eye of Mitia Kuzmitch.

“Poor traveller. Poor, poor, poor grey horse. Without us you would have died. Don’t fear, we’ll look after you.”

And he confided me to his nephew’s care. And his nephew’s name was Boubinoff. Boubinoff was rotund and healthy like the golden fruits on orange-trees I had seen in my country. I followed him. He was gay and garrulous. He narrated to me his life of a wild horse in the steppes of Mongolia and in the Gobi Desert. And he talked to me about the men of that region—the Kalmuks—who sometimes tried to capture them.

I listened to Boubinoff. And I was happy to have found a companion at last. And then, finally, we reached the valley of tarpans.

It stretched from the foot of the mountains and was triangular in shape. The road that we had taken opened out into a small wood. In the fluffy dawn I perceived at last some trees. And their presence was very comforting after all the desolate landscapes I had come through.

“Come to drink, grey horse,” Boubinoff said to me.

And he led me to a little corner of the wood. The water there sang between the pebbles and the sand of the river bank.

I restrained myself from drinking gluttonously like dogs. Staidly I hit the water as Daughter of the Wind had taught me. Then without much haste, I bent my neck in the water and started to suck. The blessed water glided into me quenching my fever. And I felt I could drink in all the water that lay before me. But I contented myself with six or seven deep mouthfuls. It was a delicious water of the sources, enriched with all the secrets of the soils it had traversed. However, I had been taught that a horse who has travelled a long and difficult distance must quench his thirst with moderation. Otherwise he sins against his breeding and education. And he also invites a horrible illness of the bowels. I raised my head and shook my mane over the tempting waters.

“Is that all?” Boubinoff asked me. “Is that all you drink, grey horse?”

“Don’t forget, Boubinoff, that I am a traveller,” I answered with a slight disdain. “And don’t forget that temperance is the virtue of the traveller.”

"I like your wisdom, grey horse. You should know a lot of things..."

"Boubinoff," I said, "couldn't you call me by my name since you know my name? Do I call you crop-eared or a dumpy tarpan?"

He neighed briefly and rubbed my neck with his forehead, fraternally.

"If you wish, Saïd, Lord of Horses. If you wish, I will call you by your name—when we are alone."

It was my turn to give him a horse-hug: the nostrils against the neck and then the nostrils against nostrils.

From that day he became my cheerful companion. We passed the day in galloping, in playing, in eating too. Mitia had specially chosen Boubinoff to look after me. And he had even told him:

"He should get back his form, this poor little grey horse. He is skinny as a donkey."

I had not appreciated his comment. To be compared to a donkey! Me! The Lord of Horses! Really Mitia was crude. But I wanted to recuperate my shape. And so I ate, I ate anything that tempted me: tender sprouts of young leaves on trees, grasses and grains. But I was careful not to munch 'rat's ear', a treacherous, velvety plant that burns up the bowels and finally kills.

I also took a bath in a pond. Boubinoff doused me and I dived in. A thousand shivers of pleasure ran through my blood and over my skin.

For three days I enjoyed this life and for three days in a valley far from men, in the company of a young tarpan, plump and full of gentle mischief, I savoured happiness.

(To be continued)

CHRISTINE & ARCHAKA

(Translated by Maurice from the original French)

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

FOR THE LOVE OF THE MOTHER

White Roses, compiled and published by *Huta*, Rs. 100.

WHITE ROSES IS a fascinating book, its printing and get-up leave nothing to be desired. It bears testimony to the infinite compassion and generosity of the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram. It is a facsimile reproduction of the letters—in the Mother's own handwriting—to Huta during the period 1955 to 1972. The letters are drenched with the light and love which the Mother always radiated. The impression made on the eyes and on the mind by the facsimiles of the Mother's handwritten epistles is wholly different from what the effect would be of the same words in cold print.

One glimpses through these letters the now legendary figure of the Mother. To the initiated, the words of the Mother are a manifestation of the Truth and sacred; even for the uninitiated, the letters are bound to have a profound appeal.

She is the Force, the inevitable Word, said Sri Aurobindo of the Mother. Her deep sense of spiritual values and her yogic knowledge of the ultimate reality permeate the book. The lessons she teaches are of timeless significance: *All that is true and sincere will always be kept—only what is false and insincere will disappear.*

Valuable Guidance

The Mother's letters afford valuable guidance to those who seek to attain the goal of Sri Aurobindo's yoga. *My truth*, said Sri Aurobindo, *is not only the truth of Bhakti or of psychic development but also of knowledge, purity, divine strength and calm and of the raising of all these things from their mental, emotional and vital forms to their supra-mental reality.*

Emphasis is laid, time and again, on the necessity of attacking and discarding the evils of falsehood and on seeing the pure flower-like heart of the Truth. With untiring affection and patience the Mother guides the footsteps of the disciple.

And this too shall pass is a thought very often at the root of the Mother's philosophy. The seeker must shun the momentary externals and surround himself with an unbroken peace and "a quiet, causeless joy". The restless throbbings and burnings, the passing delights and sorrows, should not touch the still, eternal essence of the being. *To keep intact the faith and the aspiration is all.*

The Mother speaks with a sense of definiteness and certainty and irradiates a compelling power. Her words fall like a shaft of clear morning sunlight upon a truth which you subconsciously knew to have been always there.

The Real Aim

Knowledge is a function of being, said Aldous Huxley. The real aim of human striv-

ing for truth is better self-knowledge. Those who are desirous of achieving that aim will find that there is much to be gained from a reading of these letters.

The few quotations from the writings of Sri Aurobindo seem to reach into the heart of things—their message is timeless, their help invaluable. They remind you to be stubbornly faithful to your spirit even in the darkest hour. *Live within*, said Sri Aurobindo, *be not shaken by outward happenings*. For those troubled by the mystery of death and its so-called finality—the unknown bourne from which no traveller returns—there is the great comfort of abiding faith.

Through the entire collection of the letters, there runs like a golden thread the theme of love, its power and its strength, its healing touch that helps the seeker realise the truth and the divinity in things through an unruffled inner silence. The soothing refrain of the book is that to tread the path of love and devotion to the divine is to liberate oneself from the torments of the material world.

N. A. PALKHIVALA

With acknowledgments to The Illustrated Weekly of India, January 26, 1981, p. 70.

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TOWARDS THE LORD

Prabhu Ki Ore Gae Ja (Sing Thou On Towards the Lord)—Soul's Story from Aspiration to Realisation in Hindi Songs by *Har Krishan Singh*. Published by S. Har Krishan Singh, 16, Rue Saint Louis, Pondicherry-1. Pages 162+8+4. Price Rs. 12.90.

Har Krishan Singh has already published a lovely little book of Hindi songs on the Mother entitled *Ma Ke Geet Gae Ja*. But this is the first book of its kind I have come across in which the course of the soul's journey from Aspiration to Realisation has been depicted in songs in an easy flowing language on the lines of the Path of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The entire book consisting of 138 songs is divided into 7 chapters with different attitudes, moods and aspirations of the soul in different stages of its growth. These chapters, each with a number of related songs, are entitled, Search and Aspiration, Prayer and Call, Effort and Will, Obstacles and Difficulties, Devotion and Love, Faith and Surrender, Realisation and New Life.

The songs are so spontaneously inspired that they are felt coming straight from the poet's depths and enchanting the reader. They have deep conviction of the Path and devotion to it. The smooth rhythm and easy language of these generally small-sized songs have a direct effect conveying to the reader various moods of the being in various stages of its upward movement.

Each chapter is preceded by a page of about 50 translated lines of Sri Aurobindo's

epic *Savitri* in very easy, lucid and almost colloquial Hindi related to the subject of the chapter. They give the reader an impetus for further study of the epic.

The 'Dedication' in Sanskrit, our national mother tongue, is another little charming piece of poetry from the poet's deep and dedicated soul.

The poet's painting, on the cover, of a flower named by the Mother 'Intimacy with the Divine' is an added attraction.

I ardently recommend this book to all Hindi-knowing people on the Path and I am sure that they will be amply inspired and rewarded by the sincerity and force of the songs.

The book is very modestly priced and judging from the soaring cost of printing material and from the general pricing of books this one may be considered quite cheap and a bargain.

DHARMA VIR VEDALANKAR

TWILIGHT SAGES

INCREDULOUS of a legendary Sun
 Too long unrisen ever to arise,
 Conquering with glory Night the ageless one,
 Vexing with Spirit-splendor Matter's skies;

Contemptuous of the wan and sunken orb
 Of the once sovereign moon of ideal Mind,
 Since now things tangible the sight absorb;
 And to the stars' too subtle secrets blind;

Dazzled by potent artificial lights
 That shed a pointed luster, harsh and clear,
 On patches of Life's jungle ruled by Night's
 Perpetual law of strife and lust and fear,

They mark not mystic Venus' silver call
 In the East where Night's dim forts begin to fall.

RICHARD HARTZ

AURODARSHAN

“Blessed are those who take a leap into the Future.”

—THE MOTHER

THE spirit of India has enshrined itself, as it evolved through the ages from the Vedic times, in institutions and centres of education like the *ashramas*, *gurukulas*, *parishads* and *mahaviharas*, international nuclei of higher learning and culture, that summed up the various stages of its evolutionary march. Of these great institutions *Nalanda*, *Takshasila*, *Vallabhi*, *Vikramashila*, *Odantapuri*, *Jagaddala* and *Nagarjuna Mahaviharas* deserve special mention. The time has now come to seek a fitting embodiment, beyond the barriers of race, religion or nation, for the philosophy—*darshan*—which believes in the divinity and unity of both Spirit and Matter, a philosophy which promises to be the highest peak of the Indian Renaissance. Aurodarshan would be such a world-centre which while promoting a philosophy that integrates the outlook of the East and the West would seek to ‘bring the legitimate authority of the Spirit over Matter fully developed and utilised.’ Centred in the vision of Sri Aurobindo it will be an international school of culture and research, a place of peace, concord and harmony where men of goodwill from all over the world sincere in their aspiration could live freely as members of the larger family of Man—*vasudharva kutumbakam*.

Sri Aurobindo ranks among the world’s greatest seers, poets and philosophers of all times. He has given to mankind a new comprehensive metaphilosophy, *Poorna-darshan*, a new and profound yoga, an integral world-view and has paved the way to the reconstruction of human life and society on the basis of this dynamic truth-vision. Very few in human history can be said to have advanced the cause of civilisation through the medium of their own lives. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother belong ‘to this legendary handful of the great whose legacy transcends nationality and time’, and have come to bid the earth move forward towards its luminous destiny. It is their creative vision of the golden destiny of man, and their Guidance and Grace that will shape the functioning of Aurodarshan. Aurodarshan will be our homage of aspiration and work, of love and consecration to their supreme vision of the Future. Come, let us then make Aurodarshan a symbol worthy both of our great love and infinite gratitude to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and of all that they have achieved and accomplished for us. Such a creative centre with national and international participation would enable co-operative psychic thinking on the deepest problems confronting the human race today and must, in course of time, make a profound impact on men and events in India and the world. Come, let us march from the dawns of the past towards the noons of the future.

Aurodarshan, to start with, will work on the following projects:

1. *Auromandir*: Temple of Truth, of Realisation, and of Manifestation.
2. *Vishwa-Sanskriti Bhavan*: Pavilion of World-Cultures.
3. *Saura-Bharati*: Pavilion of India, the India of our dreams, the mother and

the home of the golden Future.

4. *Theatre of the Future*: A world-centre of fine arts and performing arts.
5. An International Residential School for children of all ages, based on the educational vision of Sri Aurobindo. The School will start functioning from August 1982.
6. A well-equipped library and an auditorium.

V. MADHUSUDAN REDDY