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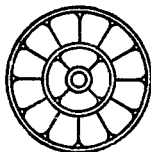
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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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TOTAL TRUTH

TWO STATEMENTS BY THE MOTHER

IF ANY element of this totality is taken separately and affirmed as the sole truth, however central or comprehensive it may be, it necessarily becomes a falsehood, for then it denies all the rest of the total Truth. This is probably what constitutes an indisputable dogma, and this is why it is the most dangerous type of falsehood, because each one affirms that it is the sole and exclusive truth. The absolute, infinite, eternal Truth is unthinkable for the mind which can only conceive that which is spatial and temporal, fragmentary and limited. Thus, on the mental plane, the absolute Truth is divided into innumerable fragmentary and contradictory truths which serve in their entirety to reproduce the original Truth as best they can—for each is a truth that attempts to affirm itself as the sole truth, to the exclusion of all the other truths, which, through their innumerable totality, express progressively in the becoming the Infinite, Eternal and absolute Truth—that is how they deny the total Truth.

*

Naturally, all these discussions (or exchanges of opinion) are purely mental and have no value from the viewpoint of the Truth. Each mind has its way of seeing and understanding things, and even if you could unite and bring together all these ways of seeing, you would still be very far from attaining the Truth. It is only when, in the silence of the mind, you can lift yourself above thought, that you are ready to know by identity.

From the viewpoint of outer discipline it is indispensable, when you have an opinion and express it, to remember that it is only an opinion, a way of seeing and feeling, and that other people's opinions, and ways of seeing and feeling are as legitimate as your own, and that instead of opposing them you should *total them up* and try to find a more comprehensive synthesis.

On the whole the discussions are always pretty futile and seem to me to be a waste of time.

5 June 1967

FAITH AND TWO ASPECTS OF THE DIVINE

A LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO

THERE are two kinds of faith:

The faith that calls down the equanimity and the faith that calls down the realisation.

These two faiths correspond to two different aspects of the Divine.

There is the Transcendent Divine and there is the Cosmic Divine.

The Will of realisation is that of the Transcendent Divine.

The Cosmic Divine is what is concerned with the actual working out of things under the present circumstances. It is the Will of that Cosmic Divine which is manifested in each circumstance, each movement of this world.

The Cosmic Will is not, to our ordinary consciousness, something that acts as an independent power doing whatever it chooses; it works through all these beings, through the forces at play in the world and the law of these forces and their results—it is only when we open ourselves and get out of the ordinary consciousness that we can feel it intervening as an independent power and overriding the ordinary play of the forces.

Then too we can see that even in the play of the forces and in spite of their distortions the Cosmic Will is working towards the eventual realisation of the Will of the Transcendent Divine.

The Supramental Realisation is the Will of the Transcendent Divine which we have to work out. The circumstances under which we have to work it out are those of an inferior consciousness in which things can be distorted by our own ignorance, weaknesses and mistakes, and by the clash of conflicting forces. That is why faith and equanimity are indispensable.

We have to have the faith that in spite of our ignorance and errors and weaknesses and in spite of the attacks of hostile forces and in spite of any immediate appearance of failure the Divine Will is leading us, through every circumstance, towards the final Realisation. This faith will give us equanimity; it is a faith that accepts what happens, not definitively but as something that has to be gone through on the way. Once equanimity is established there can be established too another kind of faith, supported by it, which can be made dynamic with something from the supramental consciousness and can overcome the present circumstances and determine what will happen and help to bring down the Realisation of the Will of the Transcendent Divine.

The faith that goes to the Cosmic Divine is limited in the power of its action by the necessities of the play.

To get entirely free from these limitations one must reach the Transcendent Divine.

June 24, 1931

“Letters on Yoga”, *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, 23: 578-579. Originally published in *The Riddle of This World*, 1933.

NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

THE COMPLETE SET

(Continued from the issue of June 1981)

October 23, 1935

Anyhow, joke or no joke, I will try the method. But the trouble is that the mind finds it difficult to believe that a vacancy can be filled up all of a sudden without any kind of thinking.

THAT is the silliness of the mind. Why should it be impossible to fill up a vacancy? It is easier for things to come into an empty space than into a full one. The error comes from thinking that your thoughts are your own and that you are their maker and if you do not create thoughts (i.e. think), there will be none. A little observation ought to show that you are not manufacturing your own thoughts, but rather thoughts occur in you. Thoughts are born, not made—like poets, according to the proverb. Of course, there is a sort of labour and effort when you try to produce or else to think on a certain subject, but that is a concentration for making thoughts come up, come in, come down, as the case may be, and fit themselves together. The idea that you are shaping the thoughts or fitting them together is an egoistic delusion. They are doing it themselves, or Nature is doing it for you, only under a certain compulsion; you have to beat her often in order to make her do it, and the beating is not always successful. But the mind or nature or mental energy—whatever you like to call it, does this in a certain way and carries on with a certain order of thoughts,—haphazard intelligentialities (excuse the barbarism) or asininites, rigidly ordered or imperfectly ordered intellectualities, logical sequences and logical inconsequences etc., etc. How the devil is an intuition to get in in the midst of that waltzing and colliding crowd? It does sometimes,—in some minds often intuitions do come in, but immediately the ordinary thoughts surround it and eat it up alive, and then with some fragment of the murdered intuition shining through their non-intuitive stomachs they look up smiling at you and say “I am an intuition, sir.” But they are only intellect, intelligence or ordinary thoughts with part of a dismembered and therefore misleading intuition inside them. Now in a vacant mind, vacant but not inert (that is important) intuitions have a chance of getting in alive and whole. But don't run away with the idea that all that comes into an empty mind, even a clear or luminous empty mind, will be intuitive. Anything, any blessed kind of idea can come in. One has to be vigilant and examine the credentials of the visitor. In other words the mental being must be there, silent but vigilant, impartial but discriminating. That is, however, when you are in search of truth. For poetry so much is not necessary. There it is only the

poetic quality of the visitor that has to be scrutinised and that can be done after he has left his packet—by results.

You have seen, I think, Prithwisingh's poem. Its very first line was hovering over my mind—I let it go, not thinking much of it, but he has obviously caught it! Many times similar instances have occurred. How is one to explain this?

There is no difficulty about explaining. You are as naive and ignorant as a new-born lamb. That is the way things come, only one does not notice. Thoughts, ideas, happy inventions etc., etc., are always wandering about (in thought-waves or otherwise) seeking a mind that may embody them. One mind takes, looks, rejects—another takes, looks, accepts. Two different minds catch the same thought-form or thought-wave, but the mental activities being different make different results out of them. Or it comes to one and he does nothing, then it walks off, saying, 'O this unready animal!' and goes to another who promptly annexes it and it settles into expression with a joyous bubble of inspiration, illumination or enthusiasm of original discovery or creation and the recipient cries proudly, "I, I have done this." Ego, sir! ego! You are the recipient, the conditioning medium, if you like—nothing more.

October 24, 1935

Your yesterday's long letter has delighted me much. The burden of it seems to be that for the present we have to take everything on trust since we lack the experience and so long as the experiences don't come what can we do but go on teasing you with our questions? And you know,

*We are not worshippers of you
But Your immortal letter!
We do not worship the dumb Blue
But his resplendent star!
Which shines and all the night shines
In the dark caves of our mines.*

(About "letter" and "star") Good Lord! I hope you don't imagine that is a rhyme?

But what about my table? Forgotten? Ellipsis?

*Out of the silence
What is the word that be
About my cane-table, Sir?
Shall I wait till Eternity?
Yes or no, do tell me, Sir;
Either can I take with surrender.*

Forgot both the cane and the table. You can have, if it is lying about. Good Lord! Another! If you rhyme Sir and surrender, you don't deserve a table but only a cane and plenty of it.

Rambhai complains of severe pain in the abdomen, due to constipation. Gave a dose of castor oil.

Rambhai is in Gujerat, if you please. If you are administering doses of castor oil to his abdomen direct from here, you must be a siddha Fascist yogi. But perhaps you mean Ramkumar? Or whom do you mean? Is it—?

October 25, 1935

You wrote to Sarat that Ramchandra doesn't believe in Allopathy at all, and considers it almost equal to quackery. Can a man apparently with some sense have such insensible notions?

But there are and have been plenty with sense who have held that view about allopathy (and homeopathy also and all medicine). What about Molière? A man of sense, if ever there was one!

But our allopathic medicine is a science developed by painstaking labour—experiment, research, etc.

To a certain extent. The theory is imposing, but when it comes to application, there is too much fumbling and guess-work for it to rank as an exact science. There are many scientists (and others) who grunt when they hear medicine called a science. Anatomy and physiology, of course, are sciences.

Dr. Ramchandra, who is a homeopath, brushes aside allopathy. What do you think of his treatment?

There are plenty of allopathic doctors who consider homeopathy, Nature-cure, Ayurveda and everything else that is not orthodox "medical science" to be quackery. Why should not homeopaths etc. return the compliment?

Let me quote one or two glaring instances of his ignorance. 1) He said to R that the thyroid gland is at the back of the neck.

I think there are many homeopaths who don't know anatomy at all. I don't think there is any such thing as a homeopathic surgeon.

Poor R was thunderstruck. He almost came to believe it.

It does not seem to have destroyed his faith in R. He has demanded "No rice" on full moon and new moon days to Dyuman's and Mother's great perplexity I had to tell the Mother about the Indian "moon" superstition.

2) After trying this and that for R's hydrocele which isn't so by his diagnosis, he applied strong irritants causing "poisonous symptoms" and gave some internal medicines to stop these symptoms.

His theory is that homeopathy first brings out the disease, then kills it. Something like Yoga, what? i.e. you have to become conscious of things inside you and then remove them. I never heard such a theory before, though—from any homeopath.

The latest development is retrenchment of bananas and no rice on new moon and full moon days! Science or witchery?

No. Not witchery nor science, but I suppose the common Indian idea. But don't doctors often make recommendations which are quite as absurd?

3) About Anilbaran, I hear Ramchandra has stopped his sun-treatment which caused him a headache. Ramchandra traced the headache to his hot-water bath and admonished him to use cold water.

I don't know anything about Ramachandra's homeopathic knowledge or capacities... But sometimes he seems to be remarkably effective. It is perhaps however due to a great power of suggestion or, if you like to call it so, induced auto-suggestion. But many doctors say it is more the confidence in the doctor and the medicine that cures than either the doctor himself or the medicine. All this is meant not to support R, but to throw some cold water on the "my" in "my science". It sounds like Mussolini almost.

I must say however that I have learnt a few things from him—calmness, self-confidence, faith.

Right—that is the thing every physician should have.

October 26, 1935

This silent mind you speak of in your letter of the 22nd, seems to be a result of Yoga.

Of course; the ordinary mind is never silent.

I don't suppose thinkers and philosophers usually write from a silent mind.

No, certainly not. It is the active mind they have; only of course they concentrate, so the common incoherent mentalising stops and the thoughts that rise or enter and shape themselves are coherently restricted to the subject or activity in hand. But that is quite a different matter from the whole mind falling silent.

If thoughts come like that, why is there a difference, sometimes a great difference, between the thought-substance of one person and that of another?

First of all these thought-waves, thought-seeds or thought-forms or whatever they are, are of different values and come from different planes of consciousness. And the same thought substance can take higher or lower vibrations according to the plane of consciousness through which the thoughts come in (e.g. thinking mind, vital mind, physical mind, subconscious mind) or the power of consciousness which catches them and pushes them into one man or another. Moreover there is a stuff of mind in each man and the incoming thought uses that for shaping itself or translating itself (transcribing we usually call it), but the stuff is finer or coarser, stronger or weaker etc., etc., in one mind than in another. Also there is a mind energy actual or potential in each which differs and this mind energy in its recipience of the thought can be luminous or obscure, sattwic, rajasic or tamasic with consequences that vary in each case.

But there are chances of getting drawn into quagmires by any blessed idea; how is one to pick out the right intuition?

Experientia docet—experience is the doctor. Also the habit of intuitivising if it is honestly done develops a discrimination that begins to know how to sort the sheep from the goats or the demis and semis and semi-demis from the real thing. By honestly I mean without ego or *parti pris*.

As for the ego—why can't I pride myself on being an instrument, a medium?

No, you can't—or if you do, you'll make an unblest mess. Why should the chisel pride itself because the sculptor uses it? He could just as well have used another and it would have done as well. But anyhow the point is that the ego brings a lack of poise and lack of receptive honesty and meddles with what is received.

You said on the 18th, "As for spiritual light, it is another thing altogether." What do you exactly mean by it? Do you mean that it can very well be had from anything—either high or low?

No, I did not mean that. I meant simply that an idealistic notion or religious belief or emotion were something quite different from getting spiritual light. An idealistic notion might turn you towards getting spiritual light, but it is not the light itself. It is true however that “the spirit bloweth where it listeth” and that we can get an emotional impulse or touch of mental realisation of spiritual things from almost any circumstance, as Bilwamangal got it from the words of his courtesan mistress. Obviously it happens, because something is ready somewhere,—if you like, the psychic being waiting for its chance and taking some opportunity in mind, vital or heart to knock open a window somewhere.

October 28, 1935

How does one have this “receptive honesty”? Is it by trying to have an inner silence and calm, and stopping all thoughts, as you point out in your letter?

That is the first condition, but not the whole process. I told you that one could not safely take *whatever comes* as the intuition and I gave you the reasons.

What I try to do now is to make my mind silent and wait for something to come.

Umph! But how are you sure that what sits up is not a mental suggestion?

And what has ego to do with all this? What one has to do is to remain just silent; and this is true for writing poetry as well as for prescribing medicines to patients.

Ego interferes in a general way—most of course in choosing medicines—and many ways, e.g., inviting pseudo-intuitions which flatter the ego. Also it may interfere when a mistake has been made and prevent you acknowledging it or even call in more pseudo-intuitions to justify and back up the original error. Innumerable are the tricks of the ego. Also, if you feel yourself becoming intuitive, rightly or wrongly intuitive, (more so if it is wrongly), then a too strong ego may develop in you megalomania and then you are gone. So don't justify ego.

I understand that Intuition will be one of the outstanding features of your Supramental creation; we will only have to shut the eyes and come off with an illumined intuition! The result will be epoch-making discoveries, inventions, etc., etc. By Jove! What a grand period it will be!

Good Lord, no! At least not till you live in the gnostic Intuition as your ordinary consciousness. So long as you are only receiving all sorts of things from everywhere, you will have to be on the *qui vive* to see that you don't make a pseudo-intuitive fool of yourself.

By the way, do not things like poetry, music, art keep up the aspiration of the soul ?

They are first in life a preparation of the consciousness—but when one does Yoga they can become a part of the sadhana if done for the Divine and of the Divine Force. But one should not want to be a poet for the sake of being a poet only or for fame, applause etc.

(To be continued)

THIS DRY SPELL

It is difficult to bear this dry spell.
 My parched throat, body and mind
 Do not demand torrential rains
 Nor the light downpour of passing cloud,
 But pine for a symbol, a sign
 That you are still within.

While I stand under the parijat,
 Dry itchy leaves fall. I ask,
 "Let the green leaves turn down their palms
 In benediction, and allow pearls of dew
 To shower blessings on my dry self.

"Let the birds pure and true
 Translate Your mercy and the vision-blue
 In drippings—a few drops salty as tears
 And as full of meaning—washing all fears.

"Let the lance of Your name
 Impale and steady this finicky mind
 And release from its heart
 Thoughts cool and moist,
 Thoughts raw, yet unbaked into dry words,
 Hence full of the waters of Your Grace."

A DREAM BUT TOO REAL TO BE CALLED A DREAM

(On 8th April 1981 after 2.30 a.m.)

RELATED BY CHAMPAKLAL

SOMEWHERE—a place totally different and unknown—the entire construction of this place was also different—as if this place was in space and there was nothing else in space except this place.

The Mother was very very serious. I put my head in Her lap. She started caressing my head softly and tenderly and continued to do so for some time. Then She called out, “Champaklal, Champaklal, Champakløl!” I did not answer and remained in the same position. I lost all control over myself and could not lift my head. Then I do not know how and in what manner my head was raised and I was gazing at The Mother. I was very serious. The Mother made a sign to me to speak as if She knew that I had something to say. She insisted that I speak. Then I replied, “Mother, I have nothing to say.” The Mother nodded Her head indicating “It is not so!”. She evidently knew what I had to say and was pressing me to speak out, without uttering a word. I repeated, “Mother, I have nothing to say.” The Mother shook Her head again expressing “It is not so!”.

The Mother was very serious—I have never seen Her so serious—but at the same time very very affectionate and compassionate. I was going more and more within and losing myself completely. But She did not allow me to go within and again gave me a very very loving and compassionate look. Her eyes were piercing me as if penetrating each cell of my body. She said, “Champaklal, the coming year is very bad—very bad—speak!”. I replied, “Yes, Mother; I have nothing to say.” She said, “Yes, I know, Champaklal, yes, I know well now” and The Mother bent Her whole Body over me. Her Body began to grow larger and larger—it became endless—and covered everything in space. There was nothing except Her limitless Body. The Mother had taken me in Her Arms. I do not know what happened afterwards but I only heard Her clear words: “I shall see.” There was absolute assurance in Her words and voice. When I awoke, I felt unimaginable peace.

This dream was of a new and different type. The Mother was in Her absolutely distinctive form. About this form—it is difficult to say anything.

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

(Continued from the issue of June 1981)

5

I WAS cherishing a hope to show my dancing to the Mother, but as I did not know dancing very well, there was some hesitation lest I should waste her time. At last I expressed my desire. She consented to see my dance. When I came to the Ashram, I had thought I would have to give up all art for the sake of sadhana, but such sacrifice was not needed. Sri Aurobindo's yoga includes all. He wrote afterwards:

"The development of capacities is not only permissible but right when it can be made part of Yoga; one can give not only one's soul, but all one's powers to the Divine." 29.6.1931

I was preparing joyfully the dance I wanted to show to the Mother. Dancing and music had been my passions from childhood. But since dancing was taboo in respectable families, I had to suppress my liking for it. As I grew up and became independent, I did what I could in my own way. I had not seen dancing of any kind anywhere except on the Bengali stage. Still, I felt a magnetic pull towards it.

I started preparing a dance tuned to Rabindranath Tagore's song, "Along with the rhythm of the dancing". The Mother saw it in the Meditation Hall upstairs. This was the first time she saw my performance. It was in 1931.

After it, she drew up a plan for us to compose the song-part of the dance. While my part was to dance, her plan had four parts expressing four moods:

1. A measureless void in Radha's mind and body. She is groping in the dark.
2. She is seeking all around, but does not find him whom she seeks. Unbearable is the anguish. At times, she hears as it were the almost forgotten anklet bells come floating from afar. She becomes impatient—a restless mood. Then all of a sudden she hears the sound of the flute. Depression vanishes. The sound comes nearer and Radha experiences ecstasy.

3. Krishna appears.

4. Radha's surrender at his feet.

These are the four moods. Dilip composed wonderful dance-music for them. Its rich artistry of tune and striking variety of rhythm appealed very much to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. I practised my dances in a large hall at Dilip's place. When previously I had wanted to practise my dance to the tune of Rabindranath's song in the same room, Sri Aurobindo had replied (referring to a sadhak who lived just under that hall downstairs.): "He is too serious to be danced over." Now, Sri Aurobindo gave permission. I was puzzled and asked him: "You wrote differently

before, and now this change?" He replied: "Perhaps before long he will cease to be too serious."

I could not contain my laughter. In everything there was his touch of humour. I began my practice but the dance fell short of the expected height. I worked hard. Meanwhile something happened. Dilip composed another beautiful piece of music—for a Dawn-dance. I tried both the dances in my own house. This Dawn-dance came off very easily and I made a discovery from it about which I wrote to the Mother: "I perceived, as I was dancing, something in a new way. Please tell me if there is any truth in it. When I started the Radha's dance, my purpose was to execute the mood of the song in the poses of the dance. As Radha's feelings are usually very intense to the Indians, especially to the Bengalis, there was nothing very new in this mood. Whatever mood the song expressed, I tried to feel it first and then give it a form. But when I started the Dawn-dance, no clear form of the mood had emerged beforehand. What appeared was the feeling of the vibration of the mood in the singing before I had understood how the language or the feeling of the song was expressed. Following that vibration the movements and various poses began to be formed. I did not remember the words of the song, only followed its inner movements. Thus, it was felt to be a new experience, having a truth in it. All things seem to have a vibration. These are, however, big words for me. What I want to say is that the 'Radha's song' was much easier than the Dawn-dance song even with regard to composition. We were not so familiar with the mood and form of the Dawn-dance; the composition too was difficult. In these respects it was a new creation. So I said that I did not try to get at any definite form at first; nevertheless everything came down very easily and naturally and I understood the inner movements. Am I right in my analysis? Is there any truth here?"

Sri Aurobindo replied:

"To feel the vibration and develop from it the rhythm of the dance is the right way to create something true; the other way, to understand with the mind and work out with the mind only or mainly is the mental way; it is laborious and difficult and has not got the same spontaneous inspiration." 29.4.1932.

I was working upon the Radha's dance but the result was not satisfactory; the true thing eluded me, though I felt at times as if I was on the verge of it when the dancing took different turns giving me a feeling of contentment. I wondered then how a person who knew very little of dance could do it. It did not take long to realise that it was not due to my power. But whenever I tried to do it by my own power, I failed. It was understood that I was following the second method mentioned by Sri Aurobindo—my mind was working, so it could not open itself. There was more labour in consequence and more time. At times I went to the Mother to show her my dance; she encouraged me a lot and expressed sympathy. One day she said, "You have to bring in more variety in your dance. See, how rich is Dilip's song in variety of movement."

In this manner I proceeded somehow to the stage of Krishna's appearance and

was thinking of beginning Radha's surrender when the Mother called and told me many things. To her nothing has an end, she has an inexhaustible store from which she can fill up our scanty hoarding. What happened next day was a big surprise—her trust in one who could do nothing, and her encouraging words to a novice were beyond imagination. She wrote:

“Sahana,

To complete what I told you yesterday about Radha's dance I have noted down as an indication of the thought and feeling Radha must have within her when she stands at the end in front of Krishna—‘Every thought of my mind, each emotion of my heart, every movement of my being, every sensation, each cell of my body, each drop of my blood, all is yours, yours absolutely, yours without reserve. You can decide my life or my death, my happiness or my sorrow, my pleasure or my pain, whatever you do with me, whatever comes to me from you will lead me to Divine Rapture.’”

What can I say about my inner feeling when I received from her this supreme boon! What did she reveal to me through this prayer of Radha, what tone of complete surrender did she make me hear? This was my constant thought. Her every word was aglow with the signature of heavenly love. What was she teaching me through this dance as a pretext, where was she leading me and to follow which rhythm in life? My whole being was hushed to fullness and tears began to flow. I could clearly understand what was meant by accepting everything as a part of yoga.

Clear it was that the Radha-dance was the sadhana of a complete surrender to the Divine and we had come to do that sadhana. We can well understand from this letter of the Mother the way in which she and Sri Aurobindo want always to lift us to what they hold up before our consciousness.

I am speaking of the time when our sadhana took a particular turn, when we were not going out or seeing anyone without the Mother's permission. She knew all about our sadhana. She created such an atmosphere around us that we felt we were living within her. Nothing could come near or violate it. There was a kind of *cordon sanitaire*, within which we were moving with great care. Wherever a strong attachment was found, blow after blow fell upon it. The Divine and the undivine forces were at play. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother explained to us what was unintelligible and showed mistakes or defects in what we were supposed to have understood. Self-introspection became very important. Whenever they saw something good in us, they encouraged and awakened a true interest in it, and if there was anything unseemly, they corrected it and lighted a flame of hope and faith. Even their reproach was couched in terms of tender sympathy. How many times and in how many ways they told and taught us the necessity of turning inward and the way to do it, how to bring about total sincerity! To study oneself at every step on the way to the transformation of consciousness, this unique training opened before us a new world, and what a number of worlds seemed to be there in oneself!

Sri Aurobindo had told us to surrender ourselves to the Mother, and one could

clearly perceive that working in all of us. He also insisted many times that we must tell her everything not only in general but even in detail. We felt indeed that these yogic movements were becoming the natural rhythm of our lives. It was well understood by us that the Mother knew everything, yet the fact of telling everything and opening ourselves to her bound us intimately to her and set her force working in us far more easily in the way she wanted so that our psychic being might awake and come to the front. Sri Aurobindo wrote to me:

“When the psychic being is in front, the sadhana becomes natural and easy and it is a question of time and natural development. When the mind or the vital or the physical consciousness is on the top the sadhana is a tapasya and a struggle.” 10.7.1934

To lead us like blind men by the hand was not the method followed by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. They wanted that we should be conscious of all our movements and tread the path accordingly. Many a time I observed that whenever we took a wrong step, they came forward with outstretched hands to help and lift us up, but at the same time they moved us to find out what had led us to act wrongly and they wanted us to profit by that discovery. As a result we got the insight which helped us to grow from within. Thus through all our mistakes and rise and fall, success and failure, we could go forward.

Once a relative wanted to come here. When I asked for some directions about it, Sri Aurobindo wrote:

“As for your inner attitude it must remain the same. Not to be excited or drawn outwards by these ‘incidents’ of the outward life or by the coming in of new elements is the rule; they must come in like waves into an untroubled sea and mix in it and become themselves untroubled and serene.

“Your present attitude and condition is all that it should be—only you must remain vigilant always. For when the condition is good, the lower movements have a habit of subsiding and become quiescent, hiding as it were—or they go out of the nature and remain at a distance. But if they see that the sadhak is losing his vigilance, then they slowly begin to rise or draw nearer, most often unseen, and when he is quite off his guard, surge up suddenly or make a sudden irruption. That continues until the whole nature, mental, vital, physical down to the very subconscious is enlightened, conscious, full of the Divine. Till that happens one must always remain watchful in a sleepless vigilance.” 26.5.1932.

Many things, which had often appeared to us meaningless trifles, did not seem so to the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s eyes, and when they made us aware of the inner movements behind them, we could detect them appearing in many forms. Nothing happens, nothing in life is without reason, there is always a hidden meaning or a true cause—this is what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother taught us again and again, removing the veil of our outer consciousness. I wrote to Sri Aurobindo:

“You have written that my physical consciousness has the habit of responding to illness. But I am not at all aware of it. How to become so? Whatever little perception I do have, makes me feel that I don’t want these things at any cost, for they do a lot

of harm to me. So, I would like to know how to become conscious of them.”

One day I was suddenly drawn into a discussion. It was about the mind. Those present wanted to say that the mind is such an instrument that it can understand everything. It can consider, discern and differentiate; it alone has the power to know the truth and make one recognise it. The importance of mind, reflection, thoughtfulness—these were the topic of discussion. I could not quite accept their view, for my mind followed what it had learnt from the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. I wrote to Sri Aurobindo what I thought and asked what his view was. This is just a part of what I wrote:

“I don’t believe that it is our mind that helps us to know the Truth from falsehood and so on, but our true being, our psychic, that helps us to know things; it is when the mind is influenced by the psychic consciously or unconsciously, that the true discrimination can be done, otherwise if the physical mind is left alone, however great it may be, it always confuses things *and prevents them from being seen in the true way.*”

Sri Aurobindo’s reply:

“To see the Truth does not depend on a big intellect or small intellect. It depends on being in contact with the Truth, and the mind silent and quiet to receive it. The biggest intellects can make errors of the worst kind and confuse Truth and falsehood if they have not the contact with the Truth or the direct experience.” 1.8.1932.

Another time I wrote in search of knowledge:

“Mother, something I have been waiting to know from you very clearly and openly. When someone is broken down by mental distress or depression, does it not truly help him if a person visits him and, sitting by his side like a friend, talks or converses with him? My own experience testifies to its good effect. Of course I am speaking of doing it with a non-egoistic attitude. I mean that if one has a true attitude and feels that through the discussions one was doing your work—would that be fruitless? Many hold that during such times discussions are baseless. My belief is that it all depends on one’s attitude. If, of course, the person himself wants no interference, it is different. Otherwise I have seen that a single word at times produces a striking effect so much so that everything changes, and the inner being takes the right bend and all becomes safe—this has often happened. It was so in the case of my mother. Does it then mean nothing? My wrong belief? Please let me know the truth.”

Sri Aurobindo replied:

“It is very often extremely useful to speak in these circumstances if the one who speaks is known or felt by the other to have sympathy with him and if he speaks in the right way.” 24.4.1935.

I asked the Mother and Sri Aurobindo a lot of questions, not for the sake of asking them, but in order to understand rightly and clear up any doubt. As long as I did not get the clarification the mind remained disturbed. While answering my points, Sri Aurobindo explained in detail so that I might grasp them well. Once I wanted to know the difference between song and poetry—I had often felt the difference, while singing, that poetry had to be understood by the mind (so had said

somebody long ago) and song was a matter of feeling. "Is that so?" was the question. How beautifully he explained the difference! Here is the letter:

"No, a song is not a kind of poem—or need not be. There are some very good songs which are not poems at all. In Europe song-writers or the writers of the librettos of the great operas are not classed among poets. In Asia the attempt to combine song-quality with poetic value has been more common, but this is not essential. In ancient Greece also lyric poetry was often composed with a view to being set to music. But still poetry and song-writing, though they can be combined, are two different arts.

"The difference is not that poetry has to be understood and music or singing felt (*anubhuti*). If you only understand the intellectual content of a poem, its words and ideas, you have not really appreciated the poem at all. And a poem which contains only that and nothing else, is not true poetry. A true poem contains something else which has to be felt just as you feel music and that is its more important and essential part. It has, first, a rhythm, just as music has, though of a different kind, and it is the rhythm that helps this something else to come out through the medium of the words. The words by themselves do not carry it or cannot bring it out altogether, and this is shown by the fact that the same words written in a different order and without rhythm or without the proper rhythm would not at all move or impress you in the same way. This something else is an inner content or suggestion, a soul-feeling or soul-experience, a vital feeling or life-experience, a mental emotion, vision, or experience (not merely an idea), and it is only if you can catch this and reproduce the experience in yourself, that you have got what the poem can give you, not otherwise.

"The real difference between a poem and a song is that a song is written with a view to be set to musical rhythm and a poem is written with a view to poetic rhythm or word-music. The two rhythms are quite different. That is why a poem cannot be set to music unless it has either been written with an eye to both kinds of rhythm or else happens to have (without especially intending it) a movement which makes it easy or at least possible to set to music. This happens often with lyrical poetry, less often with other kinds. There is also this usual character of a song that it is satisfied to be very simple in its content bringing out a single idea or feeling, and leaving it to the music to develop it; but this is not always done." 4.7.1931.

(To be continued)

A MASTERPIECE OF DISTORTION

AN ANSWER TO A READER'S REQUEST FOR LIGHT ON A CRITICISM OF SRI AUROBINDO AND HIS YOGA

The Reader's Letter

I AM enclosing extracts, translated by me into English, from a Hindi book by an author of some repute in circles appearing to be of spiritual seekers. I came across it recently and found serious misconceptions about Sri Aurobindo and his work. Would you care to set right such blatant misrepresentations of what the Master was and worked at?

The Answer

You have sent me a veritable masterpiece of distortion. I wonder how X, who claims to have an insight into spirituality, can pen such a criticism.

X seems to have dipped into Sri Aurobindo's "logical" and "philosophical" books but missed completely the great sweep of the spiritual experience that is behind the grand progression of his argument. The direct vision and the concrete realisation that have used a master-intellect to build the thought-system have not been felt at all. One who feels them would know that the "logical" and "philosophical" books were written, first, to employ fully the mental instrument which is a powerful means of manifestation and which for a world-accepting Yoga is a valuable help in establishing that Yoga's hold on the world. Secondly, the usual jibe that mysticism and spirituality are only for emotional and non-intellectual beings is met right royally by these books. Thirdly, there is the need of the present age to satisfy itself on the mind-plane. The books answer to this need in a magnificent manner.

The Integral Yoga is for man in his integrality: it brings its spiritual revelations to him on all levels and in whatever various modes are possible on them. If Sri Aurobindo is a logician and a philosopher *par excellence*, it is not because logic and philosophy are a substitute for genuine spirituality but because they are an additional expression of it—just as poetry is. And the diverse additional expressions are there because Sri Aurobindo is an integral person, a full being, accomplished on all sides. And his happening to be many-sided is in tune with not only the Integral Yoga which he propounds and communicates but also with the character of his own time. The Integral Yoga has to cope with man in his wholeness, which includes the reasoning intellect. Also, contemporary *homo sapiens* is exceedingly complex in his demands and particularly requires a structure of rationality to convince him and assure him of the suprarational. Ours is the age of analytic science.

Not understanding all this, X launches on his anti-Aurobindo campaign. But he lands himself pretty soon in confusion and self-contradiction. He says about Sri

Aurobindo: "He is an extremely logical system-maker, and system-makers are never suprarational, for systems are made only by reason. How can there be any system in non-argumentation and the non-thinkable? That is why anyone who has gone even a little beyond reason puts forward fragmentary not systematic views." A little later, X tells us: "After Shankara, no greater system-maker has been born in India than Aurobindo. But this is also his greatest limitation." If X, who has been setting forth a case, knew even the elementary logic needed for doing so, he would realise the implication of his statement. The unescapable implication is: "Shankara, who is the greatest system-maker before Sri Aurobindo, was subject to the same 'greatest limitation' as Sri Aurobindo and cannot have gone even a little beyond reason. In other words, Shankara had no spiritual experience at all of the suprarational." Will any Indian agree to this conclusion? Does even X suggest it? Not at all. He has no censure to pass on Shankara the outstanding system-maker. Nowhere does he dub him a spiritual ignoramus, as he consistently should. But what can we expect when self-satisfied mush instead of inquiring grey matter talks? One should say "ultra-mush", for even ordinary mush would try not to pull in two utterly opposite directions.

Elsewhere also X fails to keep a hold on his own initial premise that one who argues as much as Sri Aurobindo and who says so much cannot be experienced in spirituality, cannot have true spiritual knowledge. He contrasts Sri Aurobindo with Ramana Maharshi about whom he informs us: "Aurobindo remained knowledgeable but Ramana really knew. Ramana does not know the language of reason; he has no system; his statements are all atomic and he has little language to say what he knows." Then, surprisingly, X goes on to assert that merely because a man has a lot to say we cannot affirm that he lacks spiritual knowledge; "for Buddha too had much to say" and yet "experience-wise Buddha is like Ramana". Surely here X refutes himself out of his own mouth. If Buddha, who said a great deal, could be equal to Ramana in knowledge, Sri Aurobindo with his abundant speech need not be devoid of knowledge and could be at least equal in it to Buddha and Ramana!

In the matter of "descent of the Divine" our self-appointed "Daniel-come-to judgment" is ridiculous. He says that Sri Aurobindo talked only of the Divine descending and completely ignored the question of the human ascending. Actually what Sri Aurobindo said is that ascending is not enough: there must be the descent of what is ascended to: then alone can our nature-parts and life and the world be transformed. Even without the ascent, certainly the Divine can be invoked to descend—and certainly the descent can take place if the invoker prepares himself. Sometimes the descent can occur because the Divine wills it. There is no laying down the law for the Supreme or dictating the operation of the Grace. Has X never heard of the overwhelming appearance of Christ to the anti-Christian Paul on the road to Damascus? Has he never read "The Hound of Heaven"? Again, what does he mean by saying that the Divine will descend only if man ascends? What is the need of the descent if the ascent is accomplished and the Divine reached? X writes: "Mankind's history till now shows that man must strive upwards and lose himself in the divine consciousness." What

sense then is there in speaking of a descent at all? X does not know what he is talking about.

He pours ridicule on the idea of Sri Aurobindo bringing down the Divine for the world. He reminds us that all spiritual development is "individual-centred", and asks: "If I am determined to stay ignorant, can the Divine descend in me?" What he suggests is that Sri Aurobindo tried to ram the Divine down people's throats, whether they wanted the Divine or not. Obviously, such an absurdity could never have been perpetrated by Sri Aurobindo or, for that matter, by any spiritual guru. Again and again Sri Aurobindo has insisted on each individual's co-operation and preparation: even if the Supreme Grace makes the first move, the beneficiary has to follow up and carry out a course of sadhana, launch on a definite *via mystica* for receiving the higher consciousness in a continuous stream and for ultimately settling it in himself. The descent which Sri Aurobindo laboured to effect was of a new power which he distinguished as Supermind or Truth-Consciousness. From his own experience of the entire range of spiritual realisation in the world's past, he said that it was his special mission to reach beyond that range and invoke and embody the Supermind so as to serve as the radiating centre of it for whoever had the aspiration to share in the new age of earth-life which such a realisation would inaugurate. He also strove for a general descent charging the earth's atmosphere, as it were, with a supramental consciousness ready to enter all who would be prepared for it, so that in the long run this consciousness might be accessible to the race just as the mental, in various degrees, is now part and parcel of the human condition. X has gone quite off the track. He has no insight into Sri Aurobindo's personal role, nor has he the ghost of a notion of the Aurobindonian Supermind in its distinction from the diverse other aspects of the Divine that have so far been embodied and manifested.

This is the reason for his next fatuity in the utterance he puts into Sri Aurobindo's mouth. He makes Sri Aurobindo brag: "I am physically immortal." Then he gives us his own adverse reflections on the possibility of physical immortality. Nowhere in the voluminous writings of the Master can we find the statement attributed to him or even any approximation to it. The actual Yogic situation related to the question of physical immortality is entirely missed by X.

According to Sri Aurobindo, what he termed Supermind or Truth-Consciousness can alone transform or divinise the human entity totally, down to the very body. And it is clear why Sri Aurobindo considered the divinisation of the body not only possible but in the long stretch of earthly evolution inevitable. The Supermind is the complete dynamic Divine, a creative Unity-in-Multiplicity from whom our universe has derived and by whom secretly it is being worked out with its starting-point in apparently the opposite end of perfection—an immense Inconscience, the Rig-veda's original "darkness wrapped within darkness". The working out spells the expression of the supreme Divine in all the evolutionary terms—mind, life-force, even matter. The Supermind holds in itself the ultimate truth, the archetypal model of these terms: a divine mentality of which our seeking mind is a half-lit image, a divine

vitality whose semi-effective reflex is our struggling life-force, a divine materiality which our embodied existence shadows forth with its fumbling stress towards health and beauty and secure duration. Within mind, life-force and matter the Supermind itself is concealed: it is their inmost substance, with its absoluteness their implicit *dharma*: the concealed or involved Supermind is the urge behind the emergence or evolution of our nature-powers. But the urge cannot be fully successful—labouring as it does under conditions antithetical to the Divine—unless the free and un-involved and eternally expressed Supermind from beyond the mental-vital-physical complex comes down in response to the call of that complex, a call centrally spurred by what Sri Aurobindo designates the psychic being, the true soul which is the immortal spark in us of the Eternal, a delegate of the individual aspect which subsists in the Supermind's flawless unity-in-multiplicity. That is why immortality, which is the nature of the Divine and represented inwardly here by the developing and reincarnating soul, is the goal of all evolutionary terms, including the physical. There is nothing illogical in the Aurobindonian Yoga's vision of the body becoming, as a result of its supramentalisation, immune to disease, free from the ageing process and safe from final disintegration.

Without grasping the rationale of Sri Aurobindo's vision, X throws out the dictum: "He who is born will have to die: this is nature's law. Yes, the yogi can be physically immortal who does not take birth but appears all at once, not through the union of parents. It is strange that Aurobindo, born of parents, should dream of physical immortality."

No doubt, Sri Aurobindo did not fulfil the ideal he had set up—and occult reasons have been offered for what we believe to be his choice of non-fulfilment. But the fact of it is neither here nor there to the logic of the ideal. The "laws" we have observed until now relate to the state of nature reached thus far. If nature is as Sri Aurobindo envisaged and experienced it, birth from a union of parents cannot rule out what would be natural to a new dimension of spiritual realisation in the body. Towards that dimension the whole effort of the Ashram established by Sri Aurobindo tends, with a host of wonderful inner experiences on the way and with the helping presence of the Master subtly behind his Ashram always. Certainly, it is the height of gratuitous impudence for X to proclaim: "The work at Pondicherry is the most useless in the world and in the sphere of spirituality."

Even in discussing Sri Aurobindo *vis-à-vis* Lele, the Maharashtrian Yogi whom he had consulted in the early part of his spiritual search, X is utterly at sea. He has read nothing of Sri Aurobindo's notes on his relationship with Lele and on what he experienced as a consequence of Lele's instruction. Sri Aurobindo has repeatedly and in some detail recounted his Nirvana-realisation in the wake of Lele's initiating guidance. X dismisses the experience as "the petty technique of becoming a witness". He adds: "Aurobindo made the great mistake of thinking that this was the ultimate thing while it is really the first step." X is unaware that here he is practically quoting Sri Aurobindo himself. Does he not have any inkling of Sri Aurobindo's express

declaration that the Integral Yoga begins where the other Yogas end? And has he not gauged the immensity of what happened when Sri Aurobindo implicitly followed Lele's advice but realised something which Lele had never anticipated: the infinite, eternal, featureless, world-transcendent, silent Brahman who is the grand terminus of traditional Vedanta and, in a negative version, the culmination of the Buddhist enlightenment?

Until X studies Sri Aurobindo's life and reads his books carefully, making an honest and humble endeavour to understand the spirituality Sri Aurobindo wanted to establish on earth and progressively work out in his Ashram, we must totally regret his putting pen to paper in this field. The smallest of small minds, the most distorting eye, the most ignorant babbler of spiritual themes—such is X as he emerges from these several pages of pretentious gibberish.

K. D. SETHNA

A DIVINE TOOL

FREEDOM! Yes. But what is freedom, who is free?
 The blind, a step ahead who cannot see—
 A slave of self chasing his own foolish shadow—
 An invalid unable to force open the smallest window.

Arrested by light and made a prisoner of love
 And locked up in a vast white embrace, I would now
 And for ever covet the joy of oneness and crave
 To surrender my being's whole burden, as to the sea its wave.

Who would ever seek for freedom? A fool!
 Oh to be, like the Lord's flute, a divine tool!

A. VENKATARANGA

A GLIMPSE OF SRI AUROBINDO'S SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

(Continued from the issue of June 1981)

HAVING shown the spiritual destiny of mankind, Sri Aurobindo adduces some theoretical justification of his view with the help of what may be called the psychological theory of History which shows a specific line of human development and progress. He visualises the limitations of different theories of social evolution such as theological interpretation, geographical interpretation and economic interpretation of History. His "exposition of psychological stages through which human sociological evolution has proceeded opens a fresh vista peering into the rich future towards which humanity is being determined by the culminative action of its meaningful past and labouring present."¹⁷

Human society passes through certain distinct periods beginning with an infra-rational state of man and "moves through a subjective towards a supra-rational or spiritual age in which he will develop progressively a greater spiritual, supra-intellectual and intuitive, a gnostic consciousness."¹⁸ The first phase of the infra-rational order may be called Symbolic. In the early periods, societies are mainly guided by a 'strong symbolic mentality'. The highly imaginative and religiously-oriented mind of this age tries to shape and mould the inner and outer life by making proper use of symbolic forms. "In the symbolic Age, Religion and spiritual practices were not parts of life; they were indeed the whole of it."¹⁹ The Symbolic passes into the Typal Age when ideals came to be set up and pursued for their own sake. The spiritual and religious motif recedes to the background and attention is paid to the formation of Types. The social order comes to be dominated by temperament and psychic type with a corresponding ethical discipline. Dharma is the ruling idea of the Typal Age. With the march of time, the Typal Age paves the way to the next stage, *i.e.* the Conventional Age "when the external supports, the outward expressions of the spirit or the idea become more important than the idea" (Sri Aurobindo). As a result of this formalistic tendency, a system of rigid grades and hierarchies, a stereotype Religion with unquestionable authority come to be sanctified. Society in this age is dominated by custom-born habit with an inadequate comprehension of the inner significance and rational justification of various customs and conventions. But stagnation and conventionalism cannot be the rule of social dynamics. So the Conventional Age prepares the way for the Age of Individualism and Reason, when the individual by exercising his free reason comes to question the validity of all symbols, types and conventions. Religion, thought, politics are all subjected to close scrutiny and that which does not appear to be amenable to rational analysis is discarded outright. Reason goes to demolish the entire brood of symbols, forms, types, conventions so as to reconstruct everything *de novo*.

The Rational Age of social development commenced in Europe with the Renais-

sance which still continues to influence the mind of the people inhabiting different parts of the globe. The achievements of the post-Renaissance west are undoubtedly impressive but not without concomitant failures. Man's total and absolute faith in the competence of reason to solve the problems concerning human life has been belied by experience and this has already led some sane seekers to question the ultimate validity of reason. The sceptical attitude towards the efficacy of reason is inevitable because reason can never take the whole of life in its grasp. Consequently a tendency to look inward is very much manifested in modern times in its subjective approach to art, literature, religion and philosophy. This is the subjective Age. The growing interest in psychology and para-psychology and the emergence of the philosophy of existence bear unmistakable marks of the subjective approach to the problems of life. "Subjectivism," in Sri Aurobindo's view, "is a road of return to the lost knowledge. First deepening man's inner experience, restoring perhaps on an unprecedented scale insight and self-knowledge to the race, it must end by revolutionising his social and collective self-expression."²⁰ The tendency of looking inward for a solution of the problem of life, which has of late manifested itself here and there in a sporadic fashion, has not become a pervasive feature of the modern age. The modern mind still owes allegiance to physical science and is impressed by the present-day technological development with its material embellishment. And the modern man is yet to realise fully the degrading effects of raw materialism. Sri Aurobindo is fully convinced that in spite of all obstacles and failures, human society is definitely moving towards the threshold of a new age of fulfilment and perfection. This is the Spiritual Age, when the realisation of fundamental identity of all existence will be the most normal feature of our consciousness. Sri Aurobindo in the pages of *The Life Divine* and also in all his other principal works depicts in gay colours an illuminating picture of the age towards which the entire evolutionary movement is being guided by the Supreme Reality. "A spiritualised society would live like its spiritual individuals, not in the ego, but in the spirit, not as the collective ego, but as the collective Soul."²¹

Sri Aurobindo's theory of social evolution brings into focus the fact that it is a progressive movement—a teleological process. Society is moving in the direction of its ultimate destiny of evolving a world based on the religion of humanity. With the concept of social evolution and of progress is closely connected the ideal of social change. Some Social Scientists offer theories of different varieties to explain social change. Clearly, social progress and social change are not interchangeable expressions, for every social change is not necessarily progressive. Of current theories of social explanation, the economic-technological interpretation of Karl Marx and the strict technological determinism advocated by the American Sociologist Veblen deserve special mention. Both are deterministic doctrines, for both the theories seek to explain social change in terms of environmental and material conditions. Evidently, Sri Aurobindo's view of social progress is opposed to both the theories in respect of general outlook and contents. Following Hegel, Marx maintains that conflict or opposition is the very essence of social change. Society moves dialectically in the tria-

dic rhythm of thesis, antithesis and synthesis—position, opposition and reconciliation. But, according to Sri Aurobindo, conflict or opposition cannot be the true essence of evolution either social or cosmic. “All problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony”—so he says. The division of humanity into two warring classes with opposing interests is the result of the projection of subjective gloss over the vast canvas of social life. By deliberately reaping the seeds of class-hatred, one cannot serve the cause of equality, liberty and freedom from exploitation. As a matter of fact, both conflict and co-operation, contradiction and cohesion characterise social relationship and for that matter social evolution. Thus “Not opposition, but co-operation, not war, but love, would be the main-spring of the process of evolution as the increasing unfoldment of the infinite possibilities inherent in the spirit.”²²

An exposition of Sri Aurobindo’s social teaching must include his reflections on the present crisis of civilization, which he calls ‘an evolutionary crisis’. The solution he suggests to get over this crisis is very significant especially on account of its contemporary relevance. Mankind is passing through a great evolutionary crisis which, according to him, results from non-adjustment, disharmony, imbalance and spiritual poverty. The human mind has no doubt achieved enormous development in certain directions. By utilising his mental power and life-will, man has developed a complex political, social, administrative, economic and cultural machinery for satisfying his mental, vital and physical needs and desires, and consequently created a system of civilization which now appears to be too big and massive for his limited mental capacity to utilize and manage. Man in the present age has become intellectually a giant but spiritually a pigmy. The modern age is said to be the age of science which has placed at our disposal immense amenities for our physical and material comfort and well-being. Nothing has been done to transform the nature of man to any appreciable extent. Now man-made technology and scientific inventions have become dangerously independent of man and are trying to swallow man. We are living in a Frankensteinian nightmare. Apart from being retrograde because of its material and economic preoccupations, science may even bring the evolutionary urge to a halt, for it can create a feeling of false satisfaction with a “stable comfortable mechanised social living without ideal or outlook.”²³ Mere “mechanisation or rationalisation may lead to more material efficiency but it is likely to sap the spiritual resources of mankind and if this spiritual nisis is abandoned, man must either relapse to a barbaric stage or disappear as an evolutionary failure.”²⁴ Thus due to the imbalance between material-mental over-development and spiritual under-development, a situation has arisen which breeds all sorts of chaos and confusion, disunity and destruction, war and international conflict. In short, since human thoughts and activities are not being guided by a ‘creative harmonizing light of the spirit’ we are in the midst of “universalised confusion and discord out of which it is impossible to build a greater harmonic life.” That is why mankind now finds itself confronted “with a critical choice which must one day be solved if the race is to arrive or even to survive.”²⁵

In order to meet the situation, to cope with the gigantic value-neutral develop-

ment of modern technology, "a life of unity, mutuality and harmony born of a deeper and wider truth of our being" is called for, because "it is only by the perfection of the soul within that outer environment can be perfected."²⁶ Hence a radical transformation of human nature, the appearance of a new consciousness, will enable humanity to enter into a new creative age of civilization, *i.e.*, the Spiritual Age. Spirituality alone can solve our individual and social problems. To achieve a permanent evolutionary success, man must attain integral self-perfection, man must become divine. Sri Aurobindo's Integral Vedanta along with its Integral Yoga emphasizes the paramount need of supplying a spiritual foundation to our modern civilization, a spiritual re-orientation of our outlook. He has repeatedly warned us of the danger of excesses of materialism and blind pursuit of physical and vital enjoyments which would ultimately lead to frustration and the fall of civilization.

Sri Aurobindo's social outlook may be challenged on the ground of his isolated life. It is objected that he retired from active politics into a French enclave at a very critical moment of the country's freedom movement, and repeated requests to resume his political activities went unheeded. It is therefore found to be difficult to reconcile this non-committal attitude with a theoretical social concern. But it is well to remember that even after his withdrawal from active politics he did not remain completely indifferent to momentous issues having national and international importance. He publicly expressed his views on the Second World War, the Cripps Mission and the Korean war. It is also interesting to note that Sri Aurobindo warned the Indian nation of Communist China's expansionist design in Asia as early as 1950. He foresaw that China might swallow Tibet "as a gate to India".²⁷ And it is now well-known how most of his predictions proved to be prophetic. Nevertheless this withdrawal from the scene active of politics should not be interpreted as egoistically motivated; far from being so, he realised his divine mission of helping collective humanity in attaining supramental consciousness from the higher planes of being. And for helping humanity, one need not become a social reformer. As K. D. Sethna rightly observes, "There is nothing ivory-towerish about Sri Aurobindo and his so-called retirement from work is not an escape, however sublime, but a detachment from the common superficial modes of seeing and judging, a concentrated effort to establish for an all-round regenerative work in the world a new consciousness and a new life."²⁸

A modern mind who is proud of his so-called scientific and positivistic moorings might find it difficult to accept the Aurobindonian solution, especially his formulation regarding the emergence of the superman with a perfected consciousness upon earth. Even agreeing with the fundamental principle of the cosmic evolution which is affirmed by the modern physical and biological sciences, the modern man is very sceptical of an unimaginably wonderful future lying ahead of humanity. Reason is no doubt the proud possession of the present-day civilization. But to suppose that it will continue to dominate the future states of man's evolutionary progression betrays narrowness of vision and limitation of mental faculties. It can legitimately be argued that the future state of the world and the destiny of mankind must not be judged on the basis of the

standard which is current today. In the progressive movement, new principles will come into operation which cannot be measured by any of the principles which are in vogue at present. As regards the future possibility of man's divine life, Sri Aurobindo observes about modern man: "He finds the same difficulty in accepting its practical realisation here for its ultimate as would the ancestral Ape if called upon to believe in himself as the future man."²⁹

Sri Aurobindo undertakes a search for truth with great comprehensiveness and depth and has thrown new light on many obscure points which hitherto escaped the attention of most of the Social Scientists. No doubt, he has not worked out all the details of the social dynamics, yet he has given us a clear and broad framework in which solutions of social problems are to be sought. His writings express a steady vision and there is no vagueness, no uncertainty, no faltering, nor is there anything misty about it. In the present fluctuating and critical situation, society needs direction—an ideal, a harmonious and integral culture for the regeneration of mankind into a world of Truth, Beauty, Justice and Freedom. Sri Aurobindo has given us such an ideal—the divine destiny of man which can prove a framework, a ground and goal of the evolutionary progression of both the individual and the collectivity.

(Concluded)

RANJIT KUMAR ACHARJEE

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THE SECRET OF THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

AN AUROBINDONIAN APPROACH

(Continued from the issue of June 1981)

Garuda and Amrita

As Sauti brings us back to the Kadru-Vinatā wager and its consequences after the diversion into the *amṛita-manthana* to explain the birth of Uchchaiṣravas, we enter into yet another myth rich in Vedic symbolism disguised in colourful Purāṇic garb by the seer poet. This is the story of Garuḍa and his spiriting away of amṛita (sections 23 to 34 of the Āstika Parva).

The explicit parallel to Garuḍa's bringing of nectar is found in 26 and 27 of the fourth maṇḍala in the R̥gveda which read thus in Griffith's translation, describing how Śyena, the falcon, brought Soma from heaven:

I was aforetime Manu, I was Surya: I am the sage Kakṣivan, holy singer.

Kutsā the son of Arjuni I master. I am the sapient Usana, behold me.
I have bestowed the earth upon the Ārya, and rain upon the man who brings oblation.

I guided forth the loudly-roaring waters, and the Gods moved according to my pleasure.

In the wild joy of Soma I demolished Sambara's forts, ninety-and-nine, together;

And, utterly, the hundredth habitation, when helping Divodasa Atithigva.
Before all birds be ranked this Bird, O Maruts; supreme of falcons be this fleet-winged Falcon,

Because, strong-pinioned, with no car to bear him, he brought to Manu the God-loved oblation.

When the Bird brought it, hence in rapid motion sent on the wide path fleet as thought he hurried.

Swift he returned with sweetness of the Soma, and hence the Falcon hath acquired his glory.

Bearing the stalk, the Falcon speeding onward, Bird bringing from afar the draught that gladdens,

Friend of the Gods, brought, grasping fast, the Soma which he had taken from yon loftiest heaven.

The Falcon took and brought the Soma, bearing thousand Libations with him, yea, ten thousand.

The Bold One, left Malignities behind him, wise, in wild joy of Soma, left the foolish.

(IV.26)

I, as I lay within the womb, considered all generations of these Gods in order.

A hundred iron fortresses confined me but forth I flew with rapid speed a Falcon.

Not at his own free pleasure did he bear me: he conquered with his strength and manly courage.

Straightway the Bold One left the fiends behind him and passed the winds as he grew yet more mighty.

When with loud cry from heaven down sped the Falcon, thence hastening like the wind he bore the Bold One.

Then, wildly raging in his mind, the archer Kṛṣṇāṇu aimed and loosed the string to strike him.

The Falcon bore him from heaven's lofty summit as the swift car of Indra's Friend bore Bhujyu.

Then downward hither fell a flying feather of the Bird hastening forward in his journey.

And now let Maghavan accept the beaker, white, filled with the shining liquid;

The best of sweet meath which the priests have offered: that Indra to his joy may drink, the Hero, that he may take and drink it to his rapture. (IV.27)

From these suktas we find that the falcon is bringing Soma from the loftiest heaven for Indra while Vyāsa has Garuḍa wrest amṛita away from him. Further, in the Veda the confrontation is not between the falcon and Indra, as in Vyāsa, but between the bird and Kṛṣṇāṇu who appears to be a Paṇi-like guardian of Soma denying man and gods any share of nectar.¹ In the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* this guardian of Soma is described as a Gandharva, while in the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* Soma is urged to escape Gandharva Viśvavasu in the form of a falcon.² In the eighth maṇḍala of the Ṛigveda sukta 66, ṛik 5, refers to Indra piercing the Gandharva in order to foster the Brāhmaṇ's strength and obtain Soma. The suktas quoted above contain the account of the falling of a feather of the falcon from the archer's attack which inspired the parallel incident in Garuḍa's fight with Indra. There is also the reference to breaking through innumerable adamantine obstacles for winning Soma which Vyāsa elaborates into a mighty battle between Garuḍa and the gods followed by the shattering of the protective contrivances surrounding amṛita. Ṛik 14, sukta 32 of the first maṇḍala describes Indra as a falcon speeding across nine-and-ninety rivers, which appears to be the counterpart of Garuḍa's drinking up the river waters with as many mouths for quenching the flames encircling the nectar.

These flames guarding amṛita may have their origin in the Ṛigvedic *kṛṣṇāṇu*, guardian of Soma, for the word means both "fire" and "Gandharva"³ (cf. *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* I.9.3 *vide* Dange, *op. cit.*). Dange points out that in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* I.287 ff. Soma is said to be protected by fires called *Dhisnyas* who were Gandharvas and that these Gandharvas were poisonous serpents (paralleling the reptiles guarding nectar, whom Garuḍa destroys). This particular account also states that Soma lay

between two golden cups which were repeatedly nearing each other and withdrawing. Dange argues that here we have an analogue of the razor-sharp discus destroyed by Garuḍa. What, however, offers a clue to the symbolism of the Garuḍa myth is the Dhisnya fires acting as the guardians of Soma because, as pointed out by Dange, these are earthen fire-altars made out of earth dug for preparing earthen drums used in the Soma-extraction ritual. The significance of this will become clearer as we proceed.

One R̥gvedic analogue deserving mention is IX.71.6 which parallels Garuḍa's placing of amṛita on kuśa grass:

Like as a falcon to his home, so speeds the God to his own golden wisely-fashioned place to rest.

With song they urge the darling to the sacred grass: the Holy One goes like a courser to the Gods.

The Holy One, the Falcon, is a reference to Soma. As we shall see, the Bird image is frequently, and very unambiguously, applied to Soma in the Veda.

Another interesting reference is to be found in the last two suktas of the second maṇḍala in the R̥gveda. Both are addressed to the bird Kapiñjala, identified with Indra. In the first of these, sukta 42, the Garuḍa-Indra roles are reversed as the god is exhorted

Let not the falcon kill thee, nor the eagle

as though Garuḍa-eagle is the aggressor. In the same ṛik (ṛik 2) the archer symbol also occurs. Again there is a reversal of roles and Kapiñjala appears to assume the role of Garuḍa struck by Indra or Kṛṣṇaṇu:

Let not the arrow-bearing archer reach thee.

The second sukta will be discussed in its proper place, in connection with the Bird symbol used to represent Vāk, the Divine Word, Logos. This Indra-Kapiñjala bird merges with the Soma-falcon symbol in IX.82.3 where Parjanya (a synonym of Indra in his rain-god aspect) is described as the father of Soma-Pavamana, "the Mighty Bird" who has his home "on mountains, in earth's centre", which recalls the *amṛitamantana* myth with its symbolic import of nectar having its resting place either on the heights of the hill or in the cave in its interior, discovered and released by Indra.

It will be recalled that in the study of the *amṛitamantana* myth we pointed out the R̥gvedic analogue of how Indra's *vajra* is equated with or symbolised as *adri* or *grava*, the pressing stone for extracting Soma-juice. In X.94 which is addressed to the pressing stones, we come across an intriguing reference to Eagles:⁴

The Eagles have sent forth their cry aloft in heaven; in sky's vault the dark impetuous ones have danced.

Then downward to the nether stone's fixt place they sink, and, splendid as the Sun, effuse their copious stream. (ṛik 5)

Griffith glosses the Eagles as referring to the pressing stones, and the symbolic equation with *vajra* would well fit in with the impetuous dance of lightning across the sky. Here, again, is an analogue of Garuḍa being instrumental in extracting Soma-amṛita.

It is, however, Soma which is most frequently hymned in Bird or Falcon form in the Veda. Of the ṛiks on Soma the most pertinent from our viewpoint is X.123.5-6 celebrating Vena (Soma) as the golden-pinioned bird (hence, perhaps, the epithet *suparna* applied to Garuḍa):⁵

....he, Vena, rests him on his golden pinion.

They gaze on thee with longing in their spirit, as on a strong-winged bird that mounteth skyward;

On thee with wings of gold, Varuṇa's envoy, the Bird that hasteneth to the home of Yama.

The other recurring image is that of Soma as an eagle settling in the wooden vats, representing the aspirant's soul immersed in the Bliss he has churned out of his being (wood always standing for the material being in the Veda as shown by Kapali Sastry⁶). Instances of this symbol are seen in IX.3.1, 62.4, 15 and 67.14:⁷

Here present this Immortal God flies, like a bird upon her wings

To settle in the vats of wood.

Strong-mountain-born, the stalk hath been pressed in the streams for rapturous joy:

Hawk-like he settles in his home....

Born on the mountain, lauded here, Indu for Indra is set down,

As in her sheltering nest a bird.

The Falcon dips within the jars: he wraps him in his robe and goes Loud roaring to the vats of wood.

Hand in hand with this goes the description of the Aśvins, the twin lords of Bliss, having falcons as their steeds:⁸

O Aśvins, let your falcons bear you hither, yoked to your chariot, swift, with flying pinions,

Which, ever active, like the airy eagles, carry you,

O Nasatyas, to the banquet.

(I.118.4)

The gods themselves are described as falcons in V.74.9. and VIII.62.4. The full significance of the Falcon symbol in this setting has been brought out in detail by Sri Aurobindo while commenting on ṛik 4 of the 45th sukta of the fourth maṇḍala of the R̥gveda which is addressed to the Aświns:⁹

Full of the honey are the swans that bear you, golden-winged, waking with the Dawn, and they come not to hurt, they rain forth the waters, they are full of rapture and touch that which holds the Rapture. Like bees to pourings of honey you come to the Soma-offerings.

Explaining its symbolic importance Sri Aurobindo writes:

The Bird in the Veda is the symbol, very frequently, of the soul liberated and upsoaring, at other times of energies so liberated and upsoaring, winging upwards towards the heights of our being, winging widely with a free flight, no longer involved in the ordinary limited movement or labouring gallop of the Life-energy, the Horse, *aśva*. Such are the energies that draw the free car of the Lords of Delight, when there dawns on us the Sun of the Truth. These winged movements are full of the honey showered from the overflowing skin, *madhumantaḥ*. They are unassailable, *asridhaḥ*, they come to no hurt in their flight...they make no false or hurtful movements. And they are golden-winged, *hiraṇyaparṇaḥ*. Gold is the symbolic colour of the light of Surya. The wings of these energies are the full, satisfied, attaining movement, *parṇa*, of his luminous knowledge.... Full of the honey these winged energies shower on us as they rise the abundance of the waters of heaven, the full outpouring of the high mental consciousness; they are instinct with ecstasy, with rapture, with the intoxication of the immortal wine and they touch, they come into conscious contact with that superconscient being which is eternally in possession of the ecstasy, rapturous forever with its divine intoxication. *Udapruto maṇḍino maṇḍinisparśaḥ*. Drawn by them the Lords of Delight come to the Rishi's Soma-offering like bees to tricklings of honey; *madhyo na makṣaḥ savanani gachchhathaḥ*. Makers themselves of the sweetness, they like the bees seek whatever sweetness can serve them as their material for more delight...

By the action of the Ashwins man's progress towards the beatitude becomes itself beatific; all his travail and struggle and labour grows full of a divine delight...

For the flames of the Will, the divine Force burning up in the soul, are also drenched with the overflowing sweetness and therefore they perform perfectly from day to day their great office of leading the sacrifice progressively to its goal ... to extend and build up the lower consciousness into the shining image of the world of free and luminous Mind...the individual's delight in things is met by the...delight pouring from the Truth.

The nature of Soma and the role played by the *Aśvins* in the aspirant's *yajña* is thus clearly understood. The individual's soul symbolised as the eagle or falcon is what has been celebrated in IV.26 and 27 (quoted at the beginning of this chapter). As Sri Aurobindo writes elsewhere,¹⁰

this mental being or this soul is the upsoaring Swan or the Falcon that breaks out from a hundred iron walls and wrests from the jealous guardians of felicity the wine of the Soma.

Indeed, the *Rigveda* abounds in references to the Falcon bringing the Soma-stalk from afar for the sacrificer or Indra (IV.68.6., 48.3, 76.2, 86.13, 24, 87.6, X.11.4, 144.3-5, III.43.7., IV.18.13., V.45.9., VIII.84.3., 77.11., 78., 98, etc.). Of these one of the most significant is I.93 in which *ṛiks* 4-6 provide a valuable conjunction of Agni and Soma with the Falcon symbol:¹¹

Agni and Soma, famed is that your prowess wherewith ye stole the kine, his food, from Pani.

Ye caused the brood of *Brsaya* to perish; ye found the light, the single light for many.

Agni and Soma, joined in operation ye have set up the shining lights in heaven.

From curse and from reproach, Agni and Soma, ye freed the rivers that were bound in fetters.

One of you *Matarisvan* brought from heaven, the Falcon rent the other from the mountain.

Strengthened by holy prayer Agni and Soma have made us ample room for sacrificing.

These *ṛiks* repeat the dominant *Rigvedic* motifs: the release of the herds of light and the rivers of bliss, the one associated with Agni the Mystic Fire, and the other synonymous with Soma. While the one descends from the world of *Svar*, the other is churned out of the gross material being (as described in the churning-of-the-ocean myth). The symbolic sense of the last *ṛik* quoted above has been brought out splendidly by M.P. Pandit in his discourse on the Vedic Soma:¹²

The Soma is described to have been obtained from the mountains. Doubtless, this is so both literally and figuratively. For to the mystics of the Veda, the hill or the many-plateaued mountain stood for Existence...the universal or the individual—with its rising tiers of consciousness standing on the solid base of physical matter at the bottom. Soma, the essential delight of being, constitutes the very marrow of all manifested existence and to be found with greater ease as one grows higher and higher into the altitudes of one's being and consciousness.

Hence it is said that Soma streams are coursing in the mountains, that they are to be found at the loftiest heights (IX.46.1)...

Matarishwan i.e. Vayu, the deity presiding over *prāṇa*, the life-force, has brought down Agni, the divine Will with the flame of aspiration, from his original abode above and set him in the frame of the Rishi. Agni is awakened in the being of the seeker as a result of his *tapasyā* in which the life dynamis plays a leading role. For it is only when the life-energy is yoked to the will for a higher life that the real journey of the soul gathers momentum and the entire being is set aflame with a growing and all-consuming fire of aspiration. If Agni is thus lighted by an enlightened life-force, Soma, the stream of Delight is rendered palpable as a result of a strenuous endeavour by the soul in spotting it in the difficult heights of the being and rending it down the slope. It is there on the summit of the hill (of existence) waiting to be tapped by the aspiring soul which is signified by the bird Falcon in the Ṛik. The hymn of praise, the Word of joyous gratitude which proceeds vibrating from within the being of the Seer, goes to strengthen and further the growth of Agni and Soma as a result of which there is a happy increase in the extent of his being open and pliable for self-giving to the higher Powers in the inner Sacrifice, the Yajna.

(To be continued)

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

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- ³ Dange, *op. cit.*, p. 82.
- ⁴ Griffith, *op. cit.*, p. 607.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 630.
- ⁶ *Further Lights*, *op. cit.*, p. 126.
- ⁷ Griffith, *op. cit.*, pp. 473, 490, 496.
- ⁸ Griffith, *ibid.*, p. 80.
- ⁹ *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 315, 320-322.
- ¹⁰ *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, *op. cit.* p. 34.
- ¹¹ Griffith, *op. cit.* p. 59.
- ¹² *Mystic Approach to the Veda & the Upanishad*, pp. 50. 51.

'ANU DIDI'

A STORY FOR CHILDREN

ANU was a bright girl of eight years. She used to live in Pondicherry with her mother. She had no father. She had many friends, but she used to feel lonely and would always tell her mother, "Mother dear, why did not you make a brother for me. All my friends have younger brothers and sisters. I am the only one who has no brother, no sister." Her mother found it difficult to pacify her young daughter. How could she make her believe that it was not in her hand to make a child. At last she thought of a plan to satisfy her child's need. So she wrote to her younger brother Ram to send his son Debu, who was hardly three years old. Within a fortnight Ram came with Debu, who was bubbling with joy. Debu was very soon at home with his Aunty and 'Anu didi'. He loved her, as he had no elder sister. Both played together and seemed to enjoy each other's company.

Debu was always with Anu didi, following her wherever she went. She was also very happy and felt proud of her little brother. She would show him off to her friends, who were all full of admiration for Debu. Debu was very fair, tender and almost looked like a big doll. When Anu would go to school, he would be there on the balcony to bid her 'bye-bye'. And by chance if Anu didi did not wave to him from her rickshaw he would start crying, "Aunty, didi did not wave to me." Then Aunty would take him in her arms and tell him, "Wait, Debu, let your didi come and we will not speak with her till she says 'sorry' to you." And Debu will smile shyly like a girl and Aunty would wipe his tears away. He used to cry and shed tears for every little thing and also start smiling and laughing aloud at anything which would amuse him.

Aunty would take them both at the back of her cycle. Happily all three of them would go to the sea-beach, play hide-and-seek and run about on the sand. At times Aunty would go for a long walk, leaving both children to play and run. When she would come back, they would both run to catch her first. Beaming with joy Debu would jump into Aunty's arms and hug her with warm affection. He was so tender and so loving. And from Aunty's arms he would shout at Anu and tease her, "Look, Anu didi, Aunty loves me more than you." Now it would be Anu's turn to cry and complain, "Mother dear, please take me up in your arms. Do you really love Debu more than me?" Her mother would bend over her head, and kissing her forehead would whisper in her ear, "Anu dear, you are my darling."

One day Debu was playing with Anu and Aunty called him, "Debu dear, come here, I will tell you something." Debu came running and Aunty whispered something in his ear, then she told him loudly, "Now go and take your bath and then we will... but do not tell your didi." The little one nodded gleefully and off he went for his bath. Anu, who was looking at this scene from a distance, came up to her mother and said bitterly, "Mother dear, I am your elder daughter and Debu is younger than me. Why don't you tell me what you told him?" The mother patted her child's back and

spoke softly to her "Anu, I spoke to Debu so that he might go for his bath quickly." But Anu would not listen to her and started crying, "No, no, I do not believe you. Why do you not tell me something. I am your own child and Debu is Ram Mama's son. Can you love him more than me?" The mother was taken aback at these words of little Anu. So Anu was becoming jealous of her Debu, she thought, and she lovingly caressed her and made her stop crying. When Debu came back from his bath, he found mother and daughter sitting tightly together. He ran up to Aunt and Anu jumped up and caught him and told him with authority, "She is my Mother and your Aunt." Debu smiled and, going up to his Aunt, hugged her and said, "Anu didi, she is my Mother and your Aunt." It was a habit with Debu to repeat whatever Anu would say. But Anu was a bit angry now, so she told him, "You better go away to Delhi, to your Papa." Debu was impertinent and replied, "I will stay here with aunt. You had better go to Delhi." Anu said, "All right I will go and stay with your Papa. You know how much he loves me." Debu flared up, "No, you can stay anywhere else but not with my Papa. He is my Papa." And so on and on, it continued. In the end the Mother-cum-Aunt got up and told the two of them to get ready for lunch.

After that day Anu would often tell her mother to send Debu off as he was becoming very naughty. He would take all her toys and tell her, "All the toys are mine, I will not give them to you." In the meantime, a younger brother of Anu's mother came to meet them. So the mother thought of a plan and told him to take Debu for a change, as he had been away from his parents for nearly six months, and after a month send him back. She thought that one month's separation from Debu would make Anu realise how much she had come to love Debu and how lonely she would feel. Debu was happy he was going to Delhi. He told his Aunt, "Aunt, I will come again. I like to live here with you." His Aunt reassured him, "Yes, Debu dear. Your Papa will bring you here very soon. You know how much I love you and didi also."

So off went Debu with his uncle to Delhi. For a few days Anu was happy and played with her toys. But soon she was sick of her toys. She wanted her living toy, Debu, with whom she could play, fight, shout and laugh. She became sad. How could she say this to her mother?

One day both of them went to the seaside. They walked for a long time and then Anu burst out, "Mother dear, I feel so lonely. There is no fun without Debu. Why don't you write to Ram Mama to send him back?" The mother had been watching her child and knew how miserable she must be feeling. But she pretended she had noticed nothing. So she said, "Anu dear, what is the use of calling Debu back? He will take away your toys, fight with you and disturb you when you study." "No," Anu stamped her feet and pleaded with her mother. "Mother dear, do let Debu come back. Do you not know how much I love him? Is he not my younger brother? What does it matter if he takes away my toys? He himself is my living toy." The mother embraced her child, who clung to her loving parent's bosom and would not like to part with her. Slowly and softly the mother calmed her down and told her

laughingly, "I know it. So be happy. Debu is coming next week and he will be staying with us forever. I have got him admitted in your school. So both of you will go to school together." Anu jumped out of joy and after many days laughed loudly, clapping her hands, and danced merrily, "Debu will come. My brother will come. Now my love will have no jealousy and I shall be so happy!"

PUSHPA ANAND

THE LORD OF HORSES

A NOVELLA

(Continued from the issue of June 1981)

6

WHEN Mitia Kuzmitch felt that I had regained my form he announced to me that henceforth I would join the expeditions of the comrades.

He waited for twilight and when twilight came he neighed three times. This was the signal. And at once from the four corners of the valley, the tarpans converged towards him and Mitia Kuzmitch launched on a narrow path between two rocky piles. And his company went after him, at a walking pace first, then in a short trot. And Boubinoff followed the company. And I followed Boubinoff. After two hours' march we came out into a steppe. In that glaucous darkness the steppe looked like a huge fur-coat, the fur-coat of a gigantic animal.

And there we galloped as we liked, as wildly, as fiercely as we liked. And the grass there, it seemed, had magic in it.

Mitia Kuzmitch assembled us around him. He kept still as he collected himself. And we too remained silent. In a moment he would say:

“Go ahead! Gallop!”

I thought he wanted to make us appreciate the moment when one gathers up all one's energies, before dashing away, the moment when passion rushes up like sap in the body—hot and intoxicating.

“Go, gallop!” commanded Mitia.

I leaped. And in that moment rediscovered the voluptuousness of drinking in the wind of freedom without the need of being alone. And I filled my lungs and filled my chest, raised my neck and then lowered it. All my muscles responded to my desires. I felt as if each drop of my blood, each nerve of my body, every inch of my flesh was participating in that thrill. I was aware of all that was going on within me, of everything that moved, of everything that vibrated and paced through me.

I waxed in my happiness. I galloped in that steppe of Mongolia as I had galloped a few months earlier in the light of the Great Desert, and as then I had melted into the light so now I melted into the night that engulfed the steppe. I became the steppe and I became the night. I felt immense. I could have galloped like this till the end of night and till the end of time. I could have galloped all my life and more, I could have galloped for all the lives to come.

Suddenly Boubinoff's voice shook me out of the trance.

“Beware, Saïd,” said Boubinoff. “Beware, Mitia Kuzmitch doesn't appear very happy.”

“Why?” I asked without bringing down much my speed.

"You're galloping much too fast," answered Boubinoff. "And you're not seeing the others. You have outstripped them, you have shut them out from your mind. And you have such a way of shaking your mane. Oh! come on, Saïd, haven't you noticed it yourself? We tarpans, we have, no doubt, beautiful golden brown coats and our legs surely are robust. But our hair.... our manes...."

"And so?" I said, "But how does that stop me from shaking my mane?"

"Mitia Kuzmitch feels that you want to stand out," answered Boubinoff. "He even said: 'If he thinks he will oblige us to confer on him the title of Lord of Horses by shaking his mane thus, well, he's mistaken.'"

I was too flabbergasted to get angry. Not only had they broken my gallop, but more, they had suspected me of being vain. Really, they were not funny, these tarpans, nor very intelligent. And they lacked singularly in nobility.

I approached Mitia Kuzmitch.

"So?" he said in a surly tone. "Are you happy with your little display, Lord of Horses?"

"We have no place here for comedians," added Mitia Kuzmitch's wife whose peculiarly heavy gait had struck me when I had first seen her.

"If you wish to stand out at any cost, we cannot keep you amongst us," Mitia Kuzmitch warned. "And you will be sent to the Lost Tundra like the other braggarts and traitors."

I kept silent. I was seething with disillusionment and rage. But I did not say a word. What could I tell him? I had to accept the fact that to savour their freedom I had to become their slave and that we had but one thing in common: we were horses. Otherwise everything else separated us.

I felt so much more close to the gazelles of the desert and I remembered Ghezala. So much more close to the jerboas and I remembered Soyala. So much more close to the camels and I remembered Ourida. More close to the eagles and I remembered Farhaj. More close to all the animals of the universe except tarpans. Because the soul of gazelles and the soul of jerboas and the soul of camels and the soul of eagles had all been formed like mine. We had been taught that longing was boundless and that passion was immeasurable. We had also been told that jealousy was the leper's disease. And I repeated to myself the favourite saying of Daughter of the Wind:

"Admire beauty and strength in others and you shall grow more strong and more beautiful."

In spite of Boubinoff's consolations—and Boubinoff, though a tarpan, was exceptionally lacking in pettiness—I ended this first night in the steppes of Mongolia in sadness, thinking about the Lost Tundra and Mitia Kuzmitch's threats. And when I asked Boubinoff about it he answered:

"Oh! don't ask me. I know nothing."

And his voice trembled with fear.

Thereafter I ate the grass without joy. I even found it bitter. And I asked myself how long I would stay amongst the tarpans. Without Boubinoff I would have perhaps

left that very night. But he was there and his gaiety and his affection were there too. Boubinoff was perhaps not the ideal brother I had dreamt of but he was certainly a good friend. Therefore I decided to be patient.

Autumn came. And Boubinoff told me:

"In autumn the Kalmuks raid the valley of tarpans. They come to capture them. They say that in the old days, a long time ago, tarpans were trained and at times even domesticated horses. They say that tarpans belonged to the Kalmuks whom they docilely obeyed."

And Boubinoff added:

"This is mere slander. Lies. No tarpan has ever been a servant. He has never been bridled, never been saddled, never been attached to anything whatsoever. The Kalmuks always crave to capture us. But they never succeed. And therefore they lie."

Boubinoff was inexhaustible when it came to talking about the Kalmuks. He described to me their narrow eyes, their yellow complexion as if smeared with saffron, their bony cheeks, their little nose deep-set between their high cheek-bones. He also described to me their life and their customs. He told me that their food was cheese made from mare's milk. And this seemed to me as scandalous as vandalism. And when I thought of my mother it revolted me more than a blasphemy.

Boubinoff recounted to me also that the Kalmuks slept on goat-skins and wore pelisses made of goat-skins too. The goats were their favourite animals. So they slept on the skins of their favourites and they also dressed themselves with them.

"I disdain them," I told Boubinoff. "And I do hope that from time to time a goat takes her revenge."

"Yes," said Boubinoff. "That does happen and it's a horrible sight. The goat rips open the Kalmuk's belly with her horns and her horns are enormous."

"That is the Justice of Allah," I told him.

"Who is Allah?" Boubinoff enquired.

"Allah is God, Boubinoff. Don't you know that?"

And Boubinoff explained to me that tarpans did not believe in God. They did not believe in the Garden of Delights either.

Eagerly I tried to explain. I told him about all the perfumes that fill the air, I told him about the music that is heard in the Garden of Delights. And the translucent fountains and golden fruits and the blue lawns where Daughter of the Wind waited for me, when suddenly Mitia Kuzmitch's war-cry rent the air as he neighed three times.

"General mobilisation," Boubinoff announced with a lot of composure.

"The Kalmuks?" I asked with no less sang-froid.

"Yes," Boubinoff replied.

Meanwhile, perched atop a rock which served him as his throne, rather his stage, Mitia Kuzmitch was lecturing away at the other end of the valley. He was telling his people:

“Listen to me, O freedom-loving comrades, O tarpans of the steppe. Listen you too, grey horse, sent to us by the two wise men of the Great Desert. The Kalmuks are on the move. They are coming and, as you know, they are men, they are warriors with no honour.

“Every year, on the same date, the same night, at the same time, under the same full moon, they come to our valley and try to capture us. And every year, they go back empty-handed and angry. And they mutter as they retreat: ‘Oh, they are devils, these tarpans!’

“Because, every year, we fool these Kalmuks. Listen well, my comrades and young tarpans and you too listen well, grey horse. This year again we will play with these tarpan-hunting Kalmuks and fool them.”

Mitia Kuzmitch took a deep breath and then continued with his harangue:

“Six of us will remain in the valley. All the others will go and hide in the mountains. The Kalmuks will emerge from up there.”

And with a movement of the forehead, Mitia Kuzmitch indicated a defile to the north of the valley.

“And so,” he said, “the chosen six will enter the defile there.”

And with a second movement of the forehead, Mitia Kuzmitch indicated another defile to the north of the valley.

“They will take care,” he said, “they will see that they neigh and gallop with a lot of noise so that the echoing mountains multiply these noises and these neighings a thousandfold. And the Kalmuks will rush after these chosen six. And the poor Kalmuk imbeciles will think they are chasing the entire lot. And the war-cry of the Kalmuks will rise into the night, covering the noise of our gallop and the noise of our neighings. And you know well, this war-cry: ‘Niak Niak Tarpanovitch, Niak Niak Kalmukseize!’ ”

Standing near Boubinoff, in a corner, I felt a strange fever knock against my flank.

The sun was still high in the sky. But then all of a sudden I saw a black snowfall like a downpour of ashes. The memory came back to me of the night when Abouaf-the-Terrible and Ozouf-the-Cruel and Tatouf-the-Merciless had murdered my Master, Mohammed-bin-Moktar, and my mother, Daughter of the Wind. And I saw myself doing justice and avenging my Master with fatal hooves. And I asked myself once more whether this night too I would play an important role.

“Who are the six chosen to wait for the Kalmuks in the valley?” I asked Mitia Kuzmitch.

“Six tarpans,” retorted Mitia Kuzmitch in a haughty tone.

“Can I join them?” I asked.

“No, certainly not,” he blurted.

“But why?”

“Because, grey horse, because these six tarpans are experienced and intelligent enough to fight and outwit the Kalmuks. They know their methods of hunting. They know how to lure them into the gorges without getting themselves entangled. They

know also how, from the mouth of the defile, to dart across the steppe in a run replete with feints and ruses. They know how to tire the Kalmuks and the Kalmuks are no mean horsemen. And these chosen six know also how to tire the horses the Kalmuks ride. These horses too are not easy creatures. They are vicious, well-fed and spurred to the blood.

"But Mitia Kuzmitch," I protested, "why should I not know how to fight against the Kalmuks? Why should I be unable to beat them? You have seen me run. Am I not the worthy son of Drinker of Air and Daughter of the Wind?"

"Enough," Mitia Kuzmitch interrupted. And his voice was lashing.

"Enough," he repeated. "You're just vain. Moreover, the Kalmuks would not even take the trouble of pursuing you. You're grey and for the Kalmuks it is the colour of donkeys."

The tarpans burst into a laugh, voluminous and impudent. I felt like charging at Mitia Kuzmitch as I had charged at Abouaf-the-Terrible and Ozouf-the-Cruel and Tatouf-the-Merciless. But I controlled myself. Mitia Kuzmitch was neither an assassin nor a plunderer. He was but a jealous boor and one does not seek revenge on those who are jealous as one seeks to avenge a murderer.

"You will hide yourself in the mountains," continued Mitia Kuzmitch. "Boubinoff will show you a good place to hide, either within a cavern or behind a heap of rocks. And you will quietly remain there."

I did not answer. But the wind answered in my stead. It suddenly rose up and lifted my mane in its sweep, my long, rich and heavy mane. The wind took my revenge. I retreated before the tarpans who had suddenly ceased laughing and my rippling mane flew like the sail. And Boubinoff walked in front of me.

"Well done," said Boubinoff. "I admire your calm, Saïd."

But I had forgotten the incident. I moved my neck, which for a horse is as good as shrugging the shoulders. And I turned towards the triangular valley where Mitia Kuzmitch had just ordered the tarpans to disperse.

In the mauve haze of evening, the tarpans scattered into small groups. I saw them take their different paths, I saw them glide behind the rocks and disappear, I saw them reappear on the heights and disappear once again. It seemed as if the mountain had slowly sucked them in. And soon enough there remained at the end of the valley only the chosen six whose duty it was to confound the Kalmuks, lure them out into the steppe and lead them astray.

And among these chosen six, whose task I passionately envied, was—let it surprise no one—Mitia Kuzmitch, the fat, dumpy Mitia Kuzmitch, the dictatorial Mitia Kuzmitch, the doyen of the tarpans.

"Come then, Saïd," Boubinoff beckoned to me. "I know of a splendid place to hide. On the crest there is a cavern and from there we can watch the chase: the entry into the gorge, the pursuit through it up to the exit into the steppe."

We had barely reached the cavern when we heard a lot of noise.

"Look," said Boubinoff.

I looked. Passionately I looked.

Exactly in front of me, about fifty metres away as the crow flies, a horde of horse-men appeared, as if spat out by the mountain, vomited from a narrow fault. In the clear moonlight, I could see them very well. I saw their boots and their black hoods that gave their heads a rapacious look. But I was too far to see their narrow eyes and their flattened noses set between high cheek-bones, and their fine moustaches. And I was still too far to see whether their complexion was really saffron-coloured. But I could see their horses. And these harnessed horses, these bridled horses with their mouths snaffled with bits, these horses were tarpans.

"Boubinoff, why did you tell me that the Kalmuks had never caught or domesticated a tarpan? Why didn't you tell me that the Kalmuks rode the tarpans?"

But Boubinoff did not answer. Ears downcast, nostrils quivering, he was watching the Kalmuks come down in the valley.

"Saïd," he said, "Saïd, what's happening? Mitia Kuzmitch has been duped. Don't you remember what he said a little while ago. He said the Kalmuks come always from the north."

"It is true," I answered. "He did say the north."

"And look, they appear from the west," said Boubinoff, his whole body trembling. "It's the west, Saïd, the west."

"And so?" I said. "Now they will surprise the chosen six. And the chosen six will not have the time to flee by the defile on the south."

"That's it," Boubinoff sadly agreed. "The Kalmuks will overwhelm the chosen six and they will hunt them in the valley. And then they will take them back as prisoners."

"No," I affirmed. "No, Boubinoff. As long as I am alive, the Kalmuks will not make prisoners of horses."

And I came out of the cavern to watch the unfurling events better.

The war-cries of the Kalmuks whirled in the night and pierced the calm. The voice of the Kalmuks was more grave and more deep than the voice of Mohammed-bin-Moktar's assassins. But it was as ferocious and wild.

"Niak Niak Tarpanovitch, Niak Niak Kalmukseize!"

Goaded their horses on, the Kalmuks flooded down the mountain. They skirted the huge boulders and leaped over the others. One would have said a part of the mountain had started to rumble and now it would move, advance, collide with the other half, where Boubinoff and I stood.

The echoing mountains amplified the din of the living avalanche. It was a deafening concert. Over the crackle of the falling pebbles that broke loose from the mountains and rolled down, over the bustle of the stampede on the stones, came this bizarre, absurd cry, as of birds in delirium: "Niak Niak Niak Niak Niak."

Mitia Kuzmitch had warned us:

"Above all else, don't reveal yourselves. Whatever happens, don't reveal yourselves. Stay in hiding."

But Mitia Kuzmitch's orders could not restrain me and I leaned out from the promontory. And Boubinoff too craned his neck out to see what was going on.

We risked being discovered by the Kalmuks. But the Kalmuks did not think of looking up towards the ridge where we perched. The Kalmuks had started hunting the tarpans and, as Boubinoff had foreseen, the air was fraught with tremendous drama.

The Kalmuks had brutally surprised the chosen six by their arrival. The chosen six, assembled at the end of the valley, did not have the time to run south and take the defile that opened out into the steppe. I saw them retreat and then in a disordered gallop rush back towards the north. And Mitia Kuzmitch too ran and galloped like the others. Yes, Mitia Kuzmitch ran and galloped, Mitia Kuzmitch went berserk with fear, Mitia Kuzmitch, the same dictatorial doyen of the tarpans who accused the Kalmuks of lacking in imagination.

Now Mitia Kuzmitch's imagination was on test.

I watched him and the other five bolt from the south northwards, towards the valley, chased by the Kalmuks who spurred their horses on, accompanied by the ceaseless cry of "Niak Niak Niak". And I foresaw the inevitable. On reaching the northern end of the valley, they would realise that the only course open to them was to turn around and attempt to break the Kalmuk ranks and gallop away towards the southern end.

But the chosen six would never have the time to take the defile which opened out into the steppe. Their only recourse would be to turn around again and attempt once more to break the Kalmuk ranks and gallop away to the north.

North and south, south and north. The tarpans were cornered in this to-and-fro, this absurd going round and round in a closed circle. Sooner or later the Kalmuks would find a way to capture them.

The Kalmuks were intrepid, crafty horsemen. I saw them rise on their saddles, then suddenly stoop to the ground shaking their long leathery lashes. And I understood that they meant to use these lashes in order to capture the tarpans.

I could not wait any longer.

Ignoring Mitia Kuzmitch's orders, ignoring the meanness that had dictated them, I told Boubinoff: "I must go to your brothers' rescue."

And I bolted. Instead of going back the way I had come with Boubinoff up to the crest, I rushed down the mountain as the Kalmuks' horses had done. I skirted the massive rocks, I leaped over the others, I jumped across rifts and crevasses. I felt extraordinarily light.

The clatter of my hooves resounded on the stones. The crackle of the pebbles that flew up as I went resounded too. And soon enough the Kalmuks' howls entered my ears:

"Niak Niak Tarpanovitch, Niak Niak Kalmukseize!"

And to this cry was now added another:

"Wohkya Wohkya!"

And I answered with the most dreadful neigh.

And I charged into the valley to meet the tarpans. And I moved my neck and shook my mane. I did not know that in the clear moonlight my coat glowed like the blade of a dagger.

For a moment the Kalmuk horsemen were left dazed. They slowed down. And the same amazement slowed down the madly coursing tarpans pursued by the Kalmuks.

In the middle of the valley, I caracoled as my Master had taught me. Breast erect, the forelegs upraised, I walked on my hindlegs.

And I also jumped with all four, then fell back to the ground. And I flew up once again. And the Kalmuks cried out:

“Wohkya Wohkya!”

And they decided to give up chasing the tarpans. They stopped pursuing Mitia Kuzmitch and the chosen five. And, as I had hoped, they rushed towards me, towards the lovely horse with the long mane who danced and leaped in the middle of the valley.

I saw a cloud of horses and horsemen unroll towards me.

And the horsemen had faces like birds of prey, slit eyes and glistening smiles. Their horses resembled Mitia Kuzmitch and Boubinoff. And I felt myself their friend and their defender. I forgave Mitia Kuzmitch his meanness and his jealousy, and vowed to fight and defend the tarpans till the very end.

The Kalmuks had come close to me. Yelling “Niak Niak” and “Wohkya Wohkya” they rushed towards me and I found myself encircled. Half-hanging out from their saddles, they unleashed their long leathery whips and shook them in my direction. Breast upraised, I split the ranks in a furious gallop. And such was my dash that the horseman in my way got unseated. And his horse fled into the mountain. And the bridle hung loose down to the hooves, and the saddle was still strapped to his back.

The Kalmuks’ yell redoubled in ferocity:

“Niak Niak Niak Niak!”

Swinging their lashes, the horsemen charged. And I let them approach. I let them crack their whips in front of me. And then I jumped over their lashes with effortless ease.

Leaning over their saddles, they tried to grab my mane. But each time I repelled them with a violent shake of the head. And kicking with all four legs I repelled their horses too.

Two Kalmuks were unseated.

Others came in their place and bravely attempted to capture me. Leaving their reins and taking off one leg from the stirrup they hung from the other. And with all their strength they grabbed my legs and clung on. But I stood up in a furious caracole and the two Kalmuks were thrown up in air. Their horses too fled away.

Then the Kalmuks attacked in groups of four and then in groups of six. But they were quickened more by panic than anything else. It was clear from their “Niaks

Niaks" and their "Wohkyas Wohkyas". They were out of breath. And their cries were now mere grunts.

I lured them into exasperated gallops that were followed by halts as brutal and sudden. And then the lightning dashes again broken by volte-faces that were like whip-lashes.

I don't know how long this chase lasted. In any case when the exhausted Kalmuks decided to stop the battle and return home, the sky was fading away. Those that had lost their horses went back as pillions on other horses. It was a pathetic procession that silently took the mountain path back home.

Myself, I did not feel tired still. And I watched the Kalmuks retreat very attentively. What proof did I have that this was not a feint?

I waited for the sun to be high up in the sky in order to rest myself. Only after I was certain that the Kalmuks' retreat was definite I set out for the wood and the source where I knew I would refresh myself.

"O Saïd," said Boubinoff, "you are indeed the Lord of Horses."

And I saw his tarpan's brown eyes become a little misty.

Mitia Kuzmitch and the chosen five joined us a little later. They had witnessed my battle with the Kalmuks from behind a rocky pile.

"Grey horse," said Mitia without much good grace, "I forgive you for having disobeyed me. I forgive you this time because this time your disobedience has rendered us a service."

"Yes, thank you," said another chosen one acidly. "Thank you for the combat and thank you for the display too."

"But mind you," observed another, "mind you, we were all ready to join the fray at any moment."

"But it would have been unwise," Mitia Kuzmitch butted in. "If we had joined the fray, the Kalmuks would have had to put up a real fight."

I shuddered from head to foot.

"With me, it was but a pretence. Is that what you think, Mitia Kuzmitch?"

Mitia Kuzmitch frowned, distended his nostrils and tried to look ironical.

"With you, how should I say?...With you, grey horse, they danced a sort of a ballet."

Suddenly I became calm and turned ice-cold. Mitia's jealousy was so obvious that it did not touch me any more. I did not say anything but turned my head away and plunged it into the water of the source.

Then the tarpans who had gone into hiding behind the mountain returned to the valley. Some approached me with kindness and said:

"It seems you fought valiantly, stranger."

And the mares thanked me in the name of their foals. And the fillies thanked me too. And their tarpan's eyes glowed with admiration.

The horses whose riders I had unseated were the warmest of all. Having got rid of their saddles and their bridles, they saluted me and said:

“We are grateful to you for our freedom, O mysterious grey horse. We can never forget all that we owe you.”

I had only done my duty. I had fought the enemy according to the precepts of Mohammed-bin-Moktar and Daughter of the Wind.

My soul was full of joy. And lulled by that silent joy I fell asleep under the trees, beside the source near Boubinoff. I dreamt that Daughter of the Wind was licking my neck and she was telling me:

“I am proud of you, Said.”

(To be continued)

CHRISTINE & ARCHAKA

(Translated by Maurice from the original French)

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The Problem of Aryan Origins by *K.D. Sethna*. (S. & S. Publishers, Calcutta 700 005) Price: Rs. 35/-.

HERE is a book of topical interest coming from the pen of K.D. Sethna. Besides being a prolific writer he has a *penchant* for such controversial subjects. Though the book is small in size, yet the author has given ample evidence of his prodigious scholarship, his critical acumen and above all a clarity and objectivity so desperately needed in these times when every issue gets clouded by unbridled passions and prejudices.

The division of the people of India into Aryans and Dravidians resulting from a theory propounded by the so-called “scientific” historians, archeologists and others of that ilk from the West has had a most pernicious effect on the polity of the Indian nation as a whole. The birth of DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) in Tamil Nadu witnessed the unfortunate politicisation of this “racial difference” culminating in separatist tendencies which are taking a long time to disappear. The value of K.D. Sethna’s book is in the fact that it is timely and may help to lay one more brick of solidarity and unity in the edifice of “National Integration” which is an elusive thing in these strife-torn days in India. It is to be appreciated that Sethna has minced no words in candidly stating that we can ill afford to be divided on such unfounded ideas and that to cut ourselves loose from the Soul of India which is one as experienced and envisioned by seers like Sri Aurobindo and the Mother will be nothing but suicide.

With an unflinching zeal, almost infectious, the author has made a considerable dent in the hypothesis of an “Aryan invasion” of India in about 1500 B.C. It is a matter of regret and shame that till recently—with a few though notable exceptions—Indian scholarship tacitly and sheepishly agreed with whatever came from the West. It is refreshing to note that a dedicated band of independent-minded scholars is emerging. Sethna, in the chapter “The Supposed Aryan Invasion”, uses all his deductive faculties to refute the popular theory both in itself and as correlated with the studies of Mohenjo-dāro and Harappā. He shows that Archaeology, sometimes the unwitting abetter of fantastically false theories, has been unable to prove that Harappā was destroyed by invading “Aryans”. The author makes good use of A.B. Keith’s remark apropos of the Rigveda—that much maligned literary and spiritual work, used and abused by the Indologists from the West—that its hymns do not reflect an Aryan invasion from outside India.

I find it difficult to understand the logic of arrangement of the chapters from the 4th chapter onwards. Perhaps one can take much help from the “Analytic Review of the Contents” given at the end of the book. The author presents an impressive array of facts after facts, critically evaluated, correlated and their essence presented to the reader. It bears ample testimony to his scholastic effort in culling these pieces of information from such diverse sources as Archaeology, History, Linguistics and Literature. It is a herculean task to co-ordinate them critically, to evaluate them, to

point out their relative strength or weakness and it is to the credit of the author that he does not drown the reader in a torrent of facts pedantically argued but weaves a very cogent case for the practically indigeneous nature of the Rigvedics.

Particular mention must be made of the chapter on the Mitanni documents of Mesopotamia. They bring in a ruling class, the Maryanni, who used a language which the author, drawing upon P. Thieme, proves to be Rigvedic. If that is so, where did the Maryanni whose date is *c.* 1340 B.C. come from? The author proves them to have hailed from an isolated pocket on the Indian north-west border, a remnant from the time—*c.* 3500-3000 B.C—when, according to the author, the Rigvedics flourished in its neighbourhood. The plausibility of such a remnant is cogently argued from the facts of linguistics as well as from those of religio-cultural history.

The Rigveda and the Harappa Culture always bristle with a lot of problems for the conscientious scholar and here too the author with consummate skill marshals enough evidence to demolish the facile assumption that the Aryans were outsiders. He has leaned truly and well on Sri Aurobindo's remarkable studies on the Rigveda. It should be mentioned here that on the basis of Sri Aurobindo we can show that the cult of Shiva found in the Harappā Culture can be easily identified with the "Rudra" of the Vedic Pantheon. In the Vedas, Rudra is described as "most bounteous", "the good and the best among the Gods". It is also remarkable that Shiva-worship is very much more prevalent in the South than in the North of India. In fact the Nayanmars (the Shaivaite saints of Tamil Nadu who sang soulful hymns called "Thevaram") extol Lord Shiva as "Then nadudaiya Shivane Potri" ("O Shiva! Hail to thee, thou who possessest the Southern country"). So the Harappāns, who were supposed to have been driven south of the Vindhya by the so-called Aryans, might themselves have been Aryans!

Sethna concludes with a well-written chapter on Sri Aurobindo's symbolic interpretation of the Rigveda in the light of the Master's own spiritual experience. But I doubt whether the Western scholastic community, given to external methods of analysis, will accept the testimony of Sri Aurobindo regarding the irrelevance of the Aryan-and-Dravidian dichotomy of India. It may well mark a turning-point when the Western scholars independently throw overboard the idea that anything subjective and intuitive is taboo. The sooner they stop dishing out theories, convenient to their own evaluating system, of the esoteric and spiritual lore of India, the better for all of us hankering after the truth. I wish fervently that persons like the author would take the lead in exposing the half-baked theories of the "omniscient" scholars of the West who with their intellect confined within scientific ratiocination present the chaff with pompous superiority after throwing away the grain.

On the whole the book makes scintillating reading for those interested in this subject. The author has to be commended for assiduously collecting an excellent and exhaustive Bibliography and a well-prepared Index. It speaks volumes about his painstaking effort in producing this book. Could he not have added a few more illustrations, plates, etc? It is certain that this book will go a long way in filling the lament-

able gap that exists in good books on topics of profound interest, critically presented especially for the younger generation, who should never be allowed to fall a victim to the conspiracy of a few academics propounding racial theories inimical to all facts.

I cannot help remarking that the book is somewhat highly priced, considering the get-up which is just average. But perhaps the publishers, when they set the price, had in view the fact that the subject is such as would appeal only to a select few and not make the book a best-seller although its quality is consistently high. They must have counted on meeting their expense from the response of a small group who would be bound to go in for a learned treatment of an important historical problem. I would advise the public to keep in mind the high quality which the publishers have appreciated in venturing on the market.

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The Social Philosophy of Tirukkural by S. Gopalan. Published by Affiliated East-West Press Pvt. Ltd., 108, Marshalls Road, Egmore, Madras-600 008. pp: XVIII+259. Price: Rs. 40/-

To claim that *Tirukkural* is the best among the best books in World Literature may be a hyperbole, but it is certainly a unique epitome of worldly wisdom. Books that deal with ethics are not many in number and even those that do so deal only with one subject or another. *Tirukkural* leaves no subject untouched. And it is universally acknowledged that not a single aspect of human life is overlooked here.

Though *Tirukkural* is supposed to have been authored 2000 years ago and though many voluminous commentaries, both classical and modern, exist, the work has received phenomenal attention only in recent decades in India and abroad as will be evident from the various translations of it that have appeared in other languages and the spate of literature that has appeared on it. Furthermore, the three centres of advanced research in *Tirukkural* established lately in the universities of Madras, Annamalai and Madurai are symptomatic of the sudden awareness of the relevance of this *magnum opus* for the task of rebuilding the nation. Perhaps no other single classical book has provoked such attention, study and research as this work in our times in India.

The book under review analyses the social philosophy of *Tirukkural* in terms of the good-life concept. And the aim of this book, as the author S. Gopalan points out, "is to delineate the social philosophy of the ancient Tamils as can be discerned in the renowned classic".

As "Literature is the mirror of the age", it is always customary to examine some relevant historical details—particularly details regarding the date that can be assigned to the work, in order to comprehend the meaning Tiruvalluvar must have had in mind. And in the prologue to the book, Gopalan refutes the arguments of the great Tamil scholar S. Vaiyapuri Pillai and the Czech Tamil scholar Kamil Zvelebil, regard-

ing the date of the classic. Many of the points argued by these two Tamil scholars in favour of their views are found baseless by Gopalan and he has his own strong points to put forth to eliminate theirs. His arguments are so effective that the reader comes to side with him. The introductory part of the book throws light on Tiruvalluvar, his style in *Tirukkural* and the rootedness of the *Kural* in Indian philosophy and culture. Talking about 'Tirukkural and Indian Traditions', the author studies Tiruvalluvar's masterpiece in relation to Brahmanical Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism and unravels the similarities and dissimilarities. By highlighting the dissimilarities, Gopalan argues that the work has certain unique features and proceeds to show us "wherein lies the original contribution of the *Kural*". "What the classic espouses and what it does not" is also made clear. And while doing so Gopalan takes care not to make an overstatement on behalf of the *Kural*.

Light is thrown on the essentials of philosophy which Tiruvalluvar himself has indicated. This is done as a preamble to the discussion of *aram*. The author makes the readers feel the depth of Tiruvalluvar's feeling on the subjects he treats in the chapter 'Aram and the Philosophy of Good Life'. He elucidates how Tiruvalluvar illustrated the possibilities of cultivating this quality of good life. Furthermore he explicates Tiruvalluvar's concept of the ideal man. One discussion leads to another and so on and all of them in every aspect prove fruitful. In fact the discussions on the overlapping terms *illaram* and *turavaram* hold water. Gopalan very cleverly discusses and substantiates his views and the best example would be the points he discusses under the questions: a) What is true asceticism and what is not? and b) Does the *Kural* prefer *illaram* to *turavaram*?

Having discussed that in the *Kural* the moral principle of *aram* is cleverly reinstated into its right place in human life by the healthy synthesis suggested by Tiruvalluvar between an ethic of emotions and an intellectualistic approach to the concept of good life, he takes into consideration the diversification of *aram*, the nucleus of good life from which all other aspects grow organically. And in Chapter IV, he analyses the various aspects of *porul* (economic and political aspects of human life) and in the following chapter he deals with *kamam*, Tiruvalluvar's treatment of the love-sex theme. Gopalan disagrees with the view that the ideas contained in the *Kamattuppal* are nothing but a reproduction (rather an appropriate term!) of those in the *Kama-Sutra* of Vatsyana, and shows us in what way the third part of Tiruvalluvar's classic is different from the erotic Sanskrit classic. His interpretations of *kalavu* and *karpu* are remarkable for their clarity. To drive home his point, Gopalan delves deep into the ancient Tamil social practices.

The concluding part of the book briefly reviews the substance of good life, according to the *Kural*, and in the epilogue the author reviews the concepts of the lifestyles of the man-in-the-world (*illarattan*) and the man-of-the-world (*turavi*) and passes on to the task of spotlighting the way the themes referred to have been deftly handled in the Tamil classic. The scholar may find the long list of books listed under 'Bibliography' useful and the lay reader can have an idea of the existing translations.

A glance at the many pages of notes and references appended to each chapter is enough to show that Gopalan is an embodiment of erudition and patience. Nowhere in the book does one find any exaggerative statement on the poet and his work. Gopalan is a critic in the real sense of the word, for he is capable of seeing the obverse and reverse of the same coin. What is more striking is the lucid style. Even a common reader can read the book for the sheer joy of it.

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