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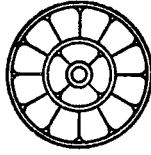
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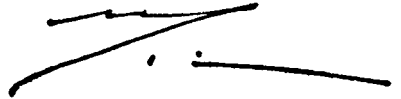


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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All correspondence to be addressed to:

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

Editor's Phone: 782

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Managing Editor: K. R. PODDAR

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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

TOWARDS the end of 1968 Nirodbaran put into my hands two old exercise-books he had found among Sri Aurobindo's papers. One had a cover greyish green and the other a brown cover. Both had been made in Madras and bore the trade-mark "Hanuman". A glance at their pages immediately gave the impression that they dated back to Sri Aurobindo's early days in Pondicherry, for his script showed his early practice of writing the English "e" like the Greek epsilon ("ε"). And this script, in two or three kinds of ink and with some portions in more than one draft, set forth a version of *Savitri* older than any I had come across.

The very first version I had known was that which Sri Aurobindo used to send me privately in small consecutive instalments day after day in 1936 and from which the final one grew to its enormous length by 1950. This version was "A Legend and a Symbol". As I discovered with Nirodbaran's help in the period after Sri Aurobindo had left his body, its predecessor had been called *Sāvithrī: A Tale and a Vision*. Here not only the name of the heroine from the Mahabharata-story but also those of the two other leading characters (the heroine's father and her elected bridegroom) were spelled differently from their forms in 1936. Instead of Aswapathy and Satyavan, they read Uswapathy and Suthyavân. The copy which I saw was in two sections. The first bore the general title Earth and was divided into four Books captioned respectively Quest, Love, Fate, Death. The second section was concerned with Beyond and consisted of parts entitled Night, Twilight, Day, Epilogue—the last relating the Return to Earth of Sāvithrī with the revived Suthyavân.

The poem opened:

The boundless spirit of Night, dreamless, alone
In the unlit temple of immensity
Waiting upon the marge of Silence sat
Mute with the expectation of her change,
An hour was near of the transfiguring gods.

Obviously, here, in a broad sense, is "the expectation" of the draft disclosed to me in 1936 and opening:

It was the hour before the Gods awake.
Across the path of the divine Event
The huge unslumbering spirit of Night, alone
In the unlit temple of immensity,
Lay stretched immobile upon Silence' marge
Mute with the unplumbed prevision of her change.

This later draft is itself a "prevision" of the final form which omits the last line and modifies lines 3 and 4 thus:

The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone
In her unlit temple of eternity...

The contents of that pair of exercise-books on which Nirobaran had lighted was the starting point of several recensions to which Sri Aurobindo seems to allude collectively in a letter of 1931 to me: "There is a previous draft, the result of the many retouchings of which somebody told you; but in that form it would not have been a 'magnum opus' at all. Besides, it would have been a legend and not a symbol. I therefore started recasting the whole thing; only the best passages and lines of the old draft will remain, altered so as to fit into the new frame."

The very prelude of the poem in the "Hanuman" exercise-books strikes a note which goes clean out of the category of "Symbol":

In a huge forest where the listening Night
Heard lonely voices and in the large hush
Was conscious of the sigh and tread of things
That have no sound for the rich heart of day,—
For now her phantom tribes were not abroad,
The panther's eyes glared not, the tiger slept
Prone in his lair of jungle or deep grass,—
Startling the wide-browed dreamer Dawn arose.

A finely descriptive and subtly imaginative recounting of a famous traditional episode is promised, something like the poetic creations of Sri Aurobindo's middle and late twenties—*Urvashi* and *Love and Death*. But, as we perceive when we read further, we have more mental power of insight than in those narrative masterpieces of an impetuous romantic vitality. Like the semi-historical *Baji Prabhou* which came after those poems, it makes—though in a different and deeper style than that dynamic martial composition's—a transition between the afflatus of the early Sri Aurobindo and the inspiration of the later. One of the technical signs of the old afflatus is the frequent nineteenth-century convention of placing adjectives on either side of a noun: it persists here in phrases like "calm bright-eyed women pure", "deep glades divine". By the time I joined the Ashram (December 1927) and took Sri Aurobindo as my Master in poetry-writing no less than as the Guru of my Yoga, he had accepted many modern modes of expression. On the long labour between the old and the new inspirations in the spiritual domain Sri Aurobindo commented in 1936: "There have been made several successive revisions, each trying to lift the general level, higher and higher towards a possible Overmind poetry." In the same letter we read: "The poem was originally written from a lower level, a mixture of the inner

mind, psychic, poetic intelligence, sublimised vital, afterwards with the Higher Mind, often illumined and intuitivised, intervening."

Since the time of Nirodbaran's discovery other drafts of the same version have surfaced. One of them mostly precedes the matter in the exercise-books, occupies a large portion of a small notebook and bears at its beginning the date "August 8th 9th/1916" and towards its end "Nov. 9". The exercise-books carry a fair copy of the contents of the notebook. Work in them was begun even before work in the latter was completed. Dates in one of them range between 1 November and 16 November. The year is not given just as it is not given at the end of the notebook—and apparently for the same reason: namely, that it is the very year in which the notebook commenced.

This dating provides a definitive gloss on Sri Aurobindo's statement on October 31, 1936: "*Savitri* was originally written many years ago before the Mother came, as a narrative poem in two parts." His explanation, in the same letter, of the two parts evidently refers to "A Tale and a Vision" which has that very division as well as a scheme of Books with identical names. And as *Savitri* (or rather *Sāvithrī*) in this form is subsequent to that in the exercise-books, this form must fall in a period later than 1916. If so, its precedence of the Mother's coming to Pondicherry proves that Sri Aurobindo had in mind not her first arrival on 29 March 1914 which was followed nearly a year later by her departure for quite a while, but her final settlement for good from 24 April 1920 onward. But how can any draft of "A Tale and a Vision" be regarded as the original *Savitri* when we are positive about an earlier version? Obviously, Sri Aurobindo looked at it as essentially a variation played upon a single theme and at the two versions as phases of one continuing phenomenon in a certain psychological progression which he characterised in two stages in the letter about lifting more and more high the inspiration of his early versions.

In that case, for all the broad affinity of "A Tale and a Vision" to "A Legend and a Symbol", "the new frame", of whose imposition on the old draft he has written, should be taken to mean a very late version. Possibly not even that which 'after several experiments at the opening line like

It was an hour of the transfiguring Gods

or

An hour was near of the transfiguring Gods

or

It was the hush of a transfiguring hour,

first struck upon

It was the hour before the Gods awake,

can qualify. In a wide sense the description would be apt only for the version on

which the later *Savitri* is based—the one just preceding that from which instalments were communicated to me in 1936. In a specific connotation it could apply only to the last-named version in which for the first time there are passages briefly recording a climbing of subtle planes of existence by Aswapathy.

To get an idea of how far the poem has moved from its beginning to its final shape across nearly half of the poet's life like a grander *Faust* until it counted 23,803 lines, we cannot but consider as a document of extreme literary interest what can be termed the first fair copy by Sri Aurobindo of the earliest draft now extant.

Here is no indication of a Part I called Earth and a Part II named Beyond. The work is simply entitled *Sāvithrī* and consists of two Books without any headings. The first book, divided into paragraphs, deals with quest, love, fate and death; the second brings in the themes of night, twilight and day, the day-section unfinished. Of the epilogue we have only one stray passage scribbled on the last page of the brown exercise-book. Almost everywhere we meet with small changes, radical alterations, even substantial additions—many of them after-thoughts that tend to link up more and more with those of a later period but which obviously came at a time when the latter had not yet taken shape.

Already there are passages forming perfect launching-pads for sustained memorable flights in the subsequent versions and even in the massive final one. An exquisite example is *Sāvithrī*'s awakening on "the day when Suthyavân must die":

Sighing she laid her hand upon her bosom,
Nor knew why the close lingering ache was there,
So quiet, so old, so natural to its place,
Till memory came opening like a bud
Her strong sleep-shrouded soul....

For a sublime as well as audacious instance we have the end of Uswapathy's Yoga:

His soul drew back into the speed and noise
Of the vast business of created things
Out of its rapt abysm. He resumed
His burden and was strong for daily deeds,
Wise with the thoughts that skim the fathomless surge
Of Nature and wing back to hidden shores.

Take for subtlety the lines on *Sāvithrī*'s natural-supernatural girlhood:

She grew like a young tree in silent bliss
Self-gathered that receives the shocks of earth
With wordless passion. Bathed in another light,
Firm, quivering inwardly with mystic rain,

Proud of the ravishing storm's immense assault,
 The tree in other calms and tempests lives.
 The shadowy touches of these outward things
 It only knows as shapes of powers within.

Or we see "natural magic" fringed with haunting mystery just before Sāvithrī catches sight of Suthyavân:

But now to a Nature more remote, self-hidden,
 From all but its own vision deep and wild,
 Attracted by the sombre forest's call
 Her chariot hastened, skirting prouder glades
 Where the green stragglers lingered in the light
 Behind immenser seas of foliage, rear
 Of a tremendous solitude of trees.
 Here in a lifting of the vast secrecy
 Where plunged a narrow cleft, a track ran hewn
 To screened infinities from a farewell space
 Of sunlight, she beheld a kingly youth...

Not only in such passages, where the turn of thought and image anticipates the future version, but also frequently elsewhere occur lines that have travelled intact to the ultimate recension—poetic surprises that could never be bettered. So in many ways there is a vivid continuity. At the same time we encounter a number of differences. Most of them are admirable in their particular roles. Some appear less happy: *e.g.*, a poetic conventionalism of language on occasion, an overworking of romantic epithets like "sweet" and "rich". But these elements, we may be sure, Sri Aurobindo himself would have weeded out on a final critical whole-look instead of piecemeal surveys at various times. What might have stayed on is a feature on a more elusive level, something psychologically organic to the period: a play of penetrating revelatory idea reaching its fulfilment just short of that absolute profundity of suggestion which is so easy and natural to an increasing degree in the later recasts of the poem.

Perhaps the last point may be best illustrated in brief by comparing a certain small passage to its definitive version. Originally, Sāvithrī declared to Yama:

Advance, O Death,
 Beyond the phantom beauty of this world,
 Of its vague citizens I am not one,
 Nor has my heart consented to be foiled.
 I cherish there the fire and not the dream.

A variant of the concluding line ran:

I cherish, god, the fire and not the dream.

A very impressive affirmation, this, artistically all the better for being self-contained by omission of the “there”, and it pierces to a fundamental posture of the soul militant and intransigent amidst a region of happy illusions. The state of the manuscript raises in one even the suspicion that Sri Aurobindo intended both the commas in the line to be omitted. The phrase would then take on a deeper colour according more directly with the speaker’s own divinely inspired nature; but one is not quite sure of the poet’s intention because of the small “g” left in of the word “god” which is always applied to Death. Whatever be the case, we are in the presence of the *mot juste* in the self-contained version. In that fine form the line would be a credit to any poet, and nobody would think of any falling short until he saw how Sri Aurobindo suddenly brought what we may term the *mot inévitable* in the ultimate recension of the passage:

Advance, O Death,
Beyond the phantom beauty of this world;
For of its citizens I am not one.
I cherish God the Fire, not God the Dream.

The full potentiality of the penetrating revelatory idea is released, the expression acquires the utmost intensity, the rhythmic movement an absolute concentration. And in the closing phrase, with its capitalised “G” and the term “God” ringing out twice, the speaker’s soul at its profoundest is laid bare and startlingly suggests without the least veil that even in spirituality there can be a crucial choice between divine truths, on which may hinge the entire destiny of man the evolutionary aspirant.

However, in dealing with the affinities and the differences, we may record a curious fact. Except for the sheer transfiguration of the *juste* into the *inévitabile* in the closing line, the ultimate recension of our passage is exactly the same as an alternative by Sri Aurobindo while producing the form with which we have contrasted that recension. The verse about Sāvithrī’s heart was not there nor did the verse preceding it have the adjective “vague”. A spare directness characterised the formulation. Only in the last line a slight rhetorical touch came in with the exclamation “O God” in place of the later more simple “god” which hovered on the verge of the final transfigurative suggestion. Thus, as regards most of this passage, the issue of affinity-difference is not so clear as it seems, though the last line spotlights it rather tellingly with its new directness of a dense rather than a spare kind.

Faithfully to trace all the differences and affinities, both on the obvious and on the elusive plane, is the editorial task in the presentation we have undertaken. But the odds against correct reading of the script in each detail are pretty formidable at times. Not only is there multiple rewriting over the lines: there is also revision done in the margins, line after line rewritten and then too not infrequently cancelled and revised. Further, at the top of the page and at the bottom we come across passages,

either definitively or tentatively cast, demanding to be woven in. Occasionally stray words or phrases besprinkle the empty spaces and they have to be fitted into their right contexts. Again, some passages occur in several shapes at unsuspected parts of the exercise-books. One has to peep into every nook and corner lest any suggestion should get overlooked. With a broad yet detailed sweep, executed mostly with the help of a magnifying glass, one has to set about "the vast business of created things" in the first fair copy.

Even so, a few uncertainties are likely to remain. They would be due either to inadequate decipherment of what has been hurriedly scribbled or to difficulty in arranging the added lines properly or else to the gaps left by the author himself for future filling as well as to inability to decide whether a word or two scratched out were really meant to be omitted. The last-mentioned problem crops up when we see that something which is run through with ink or pencil is required by the metrical scheme: no substitute is offered and yet no sign is given that the deletion should be ignored.

Whether we have accomplished our task with reasonable success or not can be judged only by some future comber of the complicated MSS. If he brings a closer eye for the *minutiae* of the Aurobindonian inspiration he will produce a better transcript, especially with the help of the larger quantity of materials that have come to hand since I made mine towards the end of 1968. But, as it has not been possible for anyone yet to set forth the exact relation of the two earliest versions or between the first fair copy and the versions following it, the transcript I have made will have to serve at the moment, for good or ill, the critical reader, the literary historian and the studious disciple with its aim to place at their disposal as authentically and completely as possible what for all practical purposes may be designated the *Ur-Savitri*.

K. D. SETHNA

SÂVITHRÎ

BOOK I

In a huge forest where the listening Night
Heard lonely voices and in the large hush
Was conscious of the sigh and tread of things
That have no sound for the rich heart of day,—
For now her phantom tribes were not abroad, 5
The panther's eyes glared not, the tiger slept
Prone in his lair of jungle or deep grass,—
Startling the wide-browed dreamer Dawn arose.
Lain in her darker thoughtful sister's robe
She pushed away the loving cloak that sealed 10
To rest her brilliant and imperious eyes
And waved the dim kind guardian from her side.
Raised were the wonderful lids that open heaven.
Vague for a while with sleep lightened her gaze.
Smiling the ever-youthful goddess rose, 15
Voluptuous in a purity divine,
Cast free her drifting robe of magic light,
And pressed her rosy fingers delicately
Upon the flushed cheek of the pallid world.
Flocking upon the ruddy verge her locks 20
Made splendid clots of morning gold, wind-lifted
To enrich the hues of space; and lucid limbs
Of secret spiritual beauty formed
Glimmered divinity through every veil.
Once she half-looked behind for her great sun, 25
Then thoughtful turned to her immortal work.
And Sâvithrî woke also in a world
That opened joyful eyes to life again
And rapturous heard the voices and the stir

There are some variants: line 20, "red-lined heavens" for "ruddy verge"—lines 22-23, "her limbs/ Of luminous spiritual beauty" for "and lucid limbs/Of secret spiritual beauty". Two lines, possible alternatives or perhaps additions somewhere, are found on one of the back-pages of the greyish green exercise-book:

Softly she leaned across the brightening verge
stepped upon

and

Delicate pearl-lustres widened in the east
Faint warm pearl-lustres delicate in the east

Of morning. Not to joy she rose; for fear 30
 Awoke with her and trembled at the dawn.
 Sighing she laid her hand upon her bosom,
 Nor knew why the close lingering ache was there,
 So quiet, so old, so natural to its place,
 Till memory came opening like a bud 35
 Her strong sleep-shrouded soul. She gazed within
 And saw the dumb white statue of pain erect
 Within its temple waiting like a god
 Daily oblation of her unwept tears.
 Then all the cruelty of thought returned, 40
 And lifting up wide beautiful heavy eyes
 She gazed upon the bright and careless Dawn.
 This was the day when Suthyavân must die.

Daughter of silence, Sâvithrî: her birth
 Was like a glorious dawn long planned in heaven, 45
 By obscure earth resisted long. Three years
 Her father lived in vigils and in fasts
 Like a still mind that gathers in its rays,
 Hushing the waves of sense to a wide sleep.
 Forced to look upward through its transient veils 50
 Life in his members sank controlled and awed
 By the strong gaze of immortality.
 He dwelt among the hastening multitudes
 Companioned only by his wide-winged spirit
 Seated within in an eternal calm. 55
 Plunged from this fretful surface into depths
 Of being where the thought sinks large and pale
 Like a tired god into mysterious seas,
 Repressing speech and wasteful act he held
 Man's hidden strength safe from life's troubled hands 60
 And Nature motionless in a silent soul.
 Thus all himself he made an offering pure
 Held up by silence priestlike to the skies
 And cast it at the burning Mother's feet—
 Heart of truth's mighty musings in far heavens 65

Line 45 originally had "beautiful hope" for "glorious dawn". Pencilled above "dawn" is the alternative: "thung".

In line 59 "wasteful" substituted the earlier "useless", and above it the alternative "trivial" has been added

On things withdrawn, immortal Sāvithrī,
 The goddess born of sacrificial fire
 Who rises chanting from an unseen sun.
 So rose she upon seven flaming tongues,
 Uplifted the world's vast rhythms in her limbs, 70
 A body of music and an anthemed voice
 Heard in the spaces that become the soul
 Of God-rapt listeners. "Ask," she cried, "the hope
 For the blind light that strives concealed on earth
 With death and the original darkness; I give 75
 For earth, to help the patient mother's life.
 That to enlarge and with divine attempt
 Amply new-sky, planting a tent of God
 In desert space thy immortal kind was born."
 He asked for children beautiful and bold, 80
 Eyed like the dawn and rapid like the seas,
 Wise as the Flame that broods within the world.
 "A flower from its burning heart profound,
 In one I give thee all," the Word replied,
 "I give thee more than all that thou hast prayed, 85
 Ray of my suns, a daughter. The ages dumb
 Intended long her fiery birth." She hushed,
 Music that ceases in the ear of trance
 Casting eternal cadences behind,
 And vanished into her intenser skies 90
 As disappears a flame in endless light,
 Immortally extinguished. Then released

In line 73 "Take" is pencilled above "Ask". A puzzling, somewhat unmetrical phrase appears in the margin before line 75: it seems to read—"For what Nature within sought her depths. I give". Line 78 has "ensphere" as variant for "new-sky", which shows that "new-sky" is used as a verb like the earlier "enlarge". It is uncertain whether the goddess Sāvithrī's speech, lines 73-79, has been correctly reconstructed from the various revisions. The very first version ran:

"Ask," she cried, "a boon.
 Ask for all heaven that strives with death long, ask
 For earth to help the patient mother's life
 Whom to uplift man and the gods were born."

Sāvithrī's second speech, lines 83-87, cannot also be quite vouched for. Originally it stood:

"In one I give thee all," the Word replied,
 "And more than all, a daughter. The ages old
 Intended long her fiery birth."

A possible alternative to lines 88-89 seems to be:

Like a wild music brought to men in trance,
 Heard tremblingly, then suddenly stolen away.

In that case, "She", which is one of the cancelled beginnings of the next line, would have to come in.

His soul drew back into the speed and noise
 Of the vast business of created things
 Out of its rapt abysm. He resumed 95
 His burden and was strong for daily deeds,
 Wise with the thoughts that skim the fathomless surge
 Of Nature and wing back to hidden shores.

Now turned the year upon its cycle sweet
 And the cool happy winter ceased in spring 100
 Rich with the instinct of God's sensuous love
 Revealed in beauty. Over all the land
 The proud asoca bloomed in crimson fire,
 The kingshook blushed upon her bridal boughs,
 The mango-blossom fed the liquid voice 105
 Of the love-maddened cuckoo and the bee
 Murmured in fragrance. Then a child was born
 Who looked upon the world with tranquil eyes.
 They named her Sāvithrī because her birth
 Sprang from that power. They said, "A flame is born 110
 Of sacrifice, a silence in the noise
 Of earthly things reveals the secret Thought,
 Love armed with strength comes down to help the world."
 Reared sweetly by her father's bright-eyed queens
 She grew like a young tree in silent bliss 115
 Self-gathered that receives the shocks of earth
 With wordless passion. Bathed in another light,
 Firm, quivering inwardly with mystic rain,
 Proud of the ravishing storm's immense assault
 The tree in other calms and tempests lives. 120
 The shadowy touches of these outward things
 It only knows as shapes of powers within.
 Through a soft quiet joy her childhood moved
 Like a small bird that with rich-coloured breast
 Sings to himself upon a pleasant bough. 125
 Escaping from this sweet serious bud a strong
 And radiant woman flowered. Deep slumbrous fire
 Was in the long-fringed glories of her eyes,
 Behind her brows there sat a noble soul
 Of vision that looked forth on earth through light 130
 And like a nectarous moon her passionate heart
 Loved all and spoke no word. Thus as she grew

Like a young palm-tree lonely by a lake,
 Her name was heard upon the wondering earth,
 The sons of kings beheld her from afar. 135
 But none dared seize her glory; all forbore
 To embrace a flame too searching for clay-bound hearts
 Earth fashions for her daily uses small.
 Sealed up in vessels of a coarser make
 By brief-lived duller warmths inured, they shrink 140
 From souls too swift and great; only they bear
 The trivial grosser touches of the world,
 Seize not its hidden fearless energies,
 Clasp not its raptures that desire the strong.
 Therefore the gods are few in mortal forms. 145

But on a morn when summer still was young
 And the last cuckoo cried among the leaves,
 While Uswapathy listened to the morn,
 Out of the shadows of the white alcoves
 Came Sâvithrî to his side burning in silence 150
 Like a young torch of incense and of flames.
 She bore her body like the sob of bliss
 Of earth's mute adoration towards heaven
 Awakened in beauty's living form. He saw,
 Pensive, her sweetness woven of golden fire, 155
 Carved like a nectar-cup for thirsty gods.
 Then took the father on his knees the child;
 Lifting her face he gazed down questioning
 Into the wonder of her long veiled eyes,
 Deep pools of thought and love as yet unstirred, 160
 That marvelled still at life and saw things far.
 There conscious of pure brooding depths he spoke,—
 Those sister queens so willed who passionate watched
 Their nursling with a tremulous delight,
 Enamoured of her firm tender ways and words, 165

Line 144 has a possible alternative "seek out" for "desire"

Line 150 has "burning stilly" as alternative to "burning in silence". After line 151 there is a variant version, a little shorter, linking up with line 159.

In her earth's adoration mute towards heaven

Had taken beauty's living form. Her father

Lifting her golden face gazed questioning down

A variant of line 158, with a comma after "gods" in line 156 and the next line omitted, is.

And questioning gazed into her long veiled eyes,

Her laughter, music of tranquillity,
 Her lustrous eyes waking in sweet large night,
 Her limbs that were linked poems made of gold
 And her slim moonbeam feet. "O child," he said,
 "Though sixteen years have ripened in thy brow 170
 Thy life dreams still, shut in its own pure bud
 Unburst by winds and ardent light. Fragrant
 Thou bloomest like a lone forgotten flower
 No hand has plucked to lay before the god.
 The heavens perhaps guard thee for some great soul 175
 Or too proud-missioned from a divine dawn
 Thy light repels the common sons of men.
 Go forth and bear the torch of a sweet quest,
 Thy heart. For somewhere surely arrived on earth
 Waiting unknown thy perfect comrade lives 180
 Kept for thee by the recompensing gods.
 Bird of the spaces, soul, I set thee free;
 Venture into the world and find thy mate
 Winging across far lands." She went, obeying,
 Like one who understands a form of words, 185
 But waits to see their secret meaning dawn.
 Her chariot rolled not among cities thronged,
 Nor sought the clamorous markets of the land,
 Nor sojourned in the palaces of kings;
 But through green musing woods, past rough-browed hills, 190
 Over wind-trod pastures and in happy groves
 Glided its course like a swift lonely hope
 Aware of a sweet mystery withheld
 Among its dreams. Still were there remnants left
 Of old primaeval spaces where one heard 195
 The sweet and dumbly murmuring voice of earth
 In the great passion of her sun-kissed trance
 And quieted the all-seeking mind could feel
 The unwearied clasp of her mute, patient love
 And know for a soul the mother of our forms. 200

In the passage beginning with line 169 the text suggests the possibility of a shorter version from line 171:

Thy life dreams still unclaimed, undrawn. Fragrant
 Thou bloomest like a lone forgotten flower

In line 192 "wheels" can substitute "course" and "swift-journeying" replace "swift lonely".

Vague-hearted, listening to a murmur long,
 Rhythm of an immenser wordless thought
 That gathers in the silence behind life
 Like one who waits some sudden revealing stroke,
 Through such bright scenes, her kindred spaces, led 205
 By the veiled guardians of her deathless past,
 She saw her road in her instinctive mind.
 There the king-sages from their labour done
 Lived happily with birds and beasts and dawn
 And evening, watched with the bright constant stars, 210
 Seeking the soul of things with boundless love,
 Or sojourned inly with a voice profound
 And a surprising light. Some sat aloof,
 Pale hermits with the tiger-skin for robe.
 Others with wives and children who grew built 215
 Among these silent mighty influences
 Into the towers of manhood they must be,
 Unripe for burdens yet and wars, lived sparsely
 On the raw forest-fruits, kindled the flame
 And chanted morn and eve the mystic's hymn. 220
 They dwelt like spirits from Time's dull yoke released,
 Once more as infants pure, their radiant thoughts
 Expecting silence. Mid these haunts of peace
 Welcomed by the great mild ascetics, sweetly
 Cherished by the calm bright-eyed women pure, 225
 Resting on plains or among mountains large
 Through hushed tranquillity of forest nights
 And when the first cries of the woodland woke,
 Watching high dawn break through the giant hills,
 Swift-wheeled she journeyed; so far-roaming came 230
 By river-banks and spaces lapped in gold
 Into the country of the Shalwa kings
 And on its borders solitary and grand
 Saw woodland verges trodden by wild deer
 And wandered over by the peacock herds. 235
 Cool-perfumed and with pleasure-burdened feet
 The morning breezes faltered among flowers;

Line 203 has "greatens" as variant for "gathers" and in the next line there seems to be "hand" as alternative to "stroke": "word" was also considered but possibly because of "wordless" in line 202 it was rejected as too obvious an effect.

Light flooded heaven's regions, all the land
 Life flooded. On green earth, in sapphire skies
 The free hare bounded and the shrill kite wheeled; 240
 Doves cooed untiring in the easeful shade,
 The snow-white cranes toiled clanging through the air
 And flame-winged wild-drakes swam in silvery pools.
 Her chariot journeyed echoing through a wide
 Uncultured earth strewn with deep glades divine 245
 That screened their sheltered murmurs from the sun.
 Primaeval peace was there and in its bosom
 Held undisturbed wild life of birds and beasts:
 Man the artificer had not arrived,
 Nor formal labour claimed for dull great cares 250
 Fields tenanted by sunlight and the rain
 And pastures of the free life of the earth.

(To be continued)

A VEDIC INVOCATION FOR AUGUST 15, SRI AUROBINDO'S BIRTHDAY AND THE DAY OF INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE

O FLAME! Master Strength! O Leader! You gather around you all the peoples of the world and bind them together. You burn bright in the high seat of Revelation, you bring all the riches.

Come together, all of you, speak in one voice, know with one mind, even like the gods who, of yore, knew with one mind and together had their share of enjoyment.

Together may they utter the mantra, may they unite together, may their mind be one, their consciousness mingle. I utter the same mantra with all, with you all equally I make the offering.

May your yearning be one, may your hearts be one, may your mind be one, so that your union be perfect.

Rig-Veda, Mandala X Sukta 191, translated by Nolini Kanta Gupta.

MOTHER INDIA AND THE TRUE NATURE AND ROLE OF EACH COUNTRY

A DECLARATION BY THE MOTHER

EVEN as the individual has a psychic being which is his true self, governing more or less openly his destiny, each nation too has its psychic being which is its true self, moulding its destiny from behind the veil: it is the soul of the country, the national genius, the spirit of the people, the centre of national aspiration, the fountain-head of all that is beautiful, noble, great and generous in the life of a country. True patriots feel its presence as a tangible reality. It is this which in India has been made almost into a divine being, and all who love truly their country call it "Mother India" (Bharat Mata), and it is to her that they daily address a prayer for the welfare of their country. It is she who symbolises and incarnates the true ideal of the country, its true mission in the world.

One would like to see in other countries too the same veneration for the national soul, the same aspiration to become fit instruments for the manifestation of its highest ideal, the same ardour towards progress and perfection leading each people to identify itself with its national soul and so find its true nature and role, making thereby each one a living and immortal being in spite of all accidents of history.

THE WORLD'S MYSTERY AND OUR WORK

SOME STATEMENTS OF THE MOTHER

THIS world is a chaos in which darkness and light, falsehood and truth, death and life, ugliness and beauty, hate and love are so closely intertwined that it is almost impossible to distinguish one from the other, still more impossible to disentangle them and put an end to an embrace which has the horror of a pitiless struggle, all the more keen because veiled, especially in human consciousness where the conflict changes into an anguish for knowledge, for power, for conquest,—a combat obscure and painful, all the more atrocious because it seems to be without issue, but capable of a solution on a level above the sensations and feelings and ideas, beyond the domain of the mind—in the Divine Consciousness.

29 March 1934

*

If one looks at outer forms no longer in themselves, for themselves, in their appearance alone, but as the expression of a deeper and more abiding reality, then all of them—as well as all circumstances and events—become symbolic of the Force that is behind and that uses them for its self-expression.

For a certain state of consciousness, there is not a single circumstance, not a form, an action or a movement that is not expressive of a deeper or higher, more abiding, more essential and truer reality.

14 November 1954

*

All things considered, looking at the world as it is and as it seems it must be irremediably, the human intellect has decreed that this world must be a mistake on the part of God and that the manifestation or creation is surely the result of desire, desire to manifest oneself, desire to know oneself, desire to enjoy oneself. Therefore the only thing to do is to put an end to this mistake as soon as possible by refusing to cling to desire and its deadly consequences.

But the Supreme Lord answers that the comedy has not yet been completely played out, and He adds, "Wait for the last act; no doubt you will change your mind."

23 July 1958

*

In our way of working we must not be the slaves of Nature; all these habits of trying and changing, doing and undoing and redoing again and again, wasting energy, labour, material and money, are Nature's way of action, not the Divine's. The Divine Consciousness sees first the truth of a work, the best way of doing it according to the

given circumstances. And when She acts it is final; She never comes back to what is done, She goes forward, using failure as well as success for a new progress, one more step towards the goal.

In order to progress Nature destroys, while the Divine Consciousness stimulates growth and finally transforms.

*

Two things you must never forget: Sri Aurobindo's compassion and the Mother's love, and it is with these two things that you will go on fighting steadily, patiently, until the enemies are definitively routed and the Victory is won for ever.

Courage outside, peace inside and a quiet unshakable trust in the Divine's Grace.

19 May 1933

(Collected Works of the Mother, Centenary Ed., Vol. 15, pp. 6-7,8,9, 13, 88)

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

Do not fear for your life—the astrologers do not always say the truth.

7 November 1939

Why do you believe in what the astrologers say? It is the belief that brings the trouble.

Sri Aurobindo says that a man becomes what he thinks he is. 1965

*

Does the cow really have a special sanctity or is it merely a tradition based on economic needs?

Mere tradition based on old symbols.

*

Water corresponds to the vital, air to mind, fire to the psychic, earth to matter and ether to the spirit.

20 August 1955

*

In ancient times the teaching of the great spiritual truths was a secret teaching reserved for a small number of initiates.

Even now there are things that are spoken but cannot be written down, and still less can they be printed.

(Birth-Centenary Vol. 15)

THE POWER OF "THE MIGHT HAVE BEEN"

AN INSIGHT OF SRI AUROBINDO

AMONG the many superficial fallacies of the practical man, there is none more superficial or fallacious than the assumption that in face of what has been, it is idle to consider what might have been. The Might Have Been in the past is the material out of which much of the future is shaped. It would not be so if the material life were a self-existent thing, proceeding out of itself, sufficient to itself, ending with itself. But the material life is only a selection, a formation, a last result of an infinite conscious life behind, which far exceeds the sum of all that actually exists in form and happens in event. Infinite Possibility is a living entity, a positive force; it is the material out of which God is constantly throwing up the positive and finite actuality. It is therefore all-important for a full and real knowledge of the world to know and see this infinite material as well as the actual finite result and ultimately determined shape of things. God Himself in His foreknowledge foresees the infinite possibilities that surround the event as well as the event itself. The forces that we spend vainly for an unrealised result, have always their ultimate end and satisfaction, and often form the most important determinants of a near or a distant future. The future carries in it all the failures of the past and keeps them for its use and for their success in other time, place and circumstance. Even our attempts to alter fixed process, when that process seems to be a fixed and unalterable law of Nature, are not lost and vain; they modify the active vibrations of the fixed current of things and may even lead to an entire alteration of the long-standing processes of things. The refusal of great minds to accept the idea of impossibility, with which they are not unoften reproached by the slaves of present actuality, is a just recognition of the omnipotence divinely present in us by right of the one supreme Inhabitant in these forms; nor does their immediate failure to externalise their dreams prove to the eye that sees that their faith was an error or a self-delusion. The attempt is often more important than the success, the victim more potent than the victor, not to the limited narrowly utilitarian human mind fixed on the immediate step, the momentary result, but to God's all-knowing Fate in its universal and millennial workings. From another standpoint, it is the infinite possibilities that surround the act or the event which give to act and event their full meaning and value. It may be said that Arjuna's hesitation and refusal to fight at Kurukshetra was of no practical moment since eventually he did take up his bow and slay the Dhritarashtrians and the otiose incident might well have been omitted by God in His drama; but if it had not been possible for Arjuna to hesitate, to fling down the bow Gandiva or to have retired from the fight but for the command of the incarnate God beside him, then his subsequent action in fighting and slaying would have had an entirely different value, the battle of Kurukshetra would have meant something entirely different to humanity and its results on the future life of the nation and the world would have been, comparatively, almost zero. We can see this truth

even with regard to slighter incidents. The fatality which in Shakespeare[’s] drama wills the death of Romeo and Juliet as the result of a trivial and easily avoidable accident, receives all its value from the possibilities surrounding the actual event, the possibilities of escape from fate, reconciliation and for these tragic lovers the life of an ordinary conjugal happiness. These unrealised possibilities and the secret inevitability—of Spirit, not of matter,—which prevents their realisation, which takes advantage of every trivial accident and makes use of it for the swift and terrible conclusion, make the soul of the tragedy. A mechanical fatality must always be a thing banal, dead, inert and meaningless. It is their perception of these things behind the veil, their transcendence of the material fact, their inspired presentation of human life that ranks the great poets among the *sophoi*, *kavis*, *vates*, and places poetry next to the Scriptures and revelations of the Seer and the prophets as one subtle means God has given us of glimpsing His hidden truths.

The unrealised possibility is as much a part of Fate as the actual event. The infinite possibilities surrounding an event are not only the materials out of which the event is made and help to modify or determine the more distant future, but alone give its true and full value to every human or cosmic action.

From *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, April 1980, pp.48-49. The titles are ours.

NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

THE COMPLETE SET

(We are temporarily interrupting the chronological sequence of this Correspondence because of a request to Nirodbaran by a reader. Nirodbaran informs us: "A reader who aspires to be a poet wishes earnestly to profit by my experience. He wants to know how I, a medical man, began to write poetry and what process I followed. I should like to present at the moment all matter relevant to the question he has put.")

December 5, 1936

As regards my method of writing, I get a line to begin with and let myself go. Very often I don't know what will follow. But this does not seem a promising method.

THAT is not the case. Very fine things can come in that way.

Can you give me your opinion? Is there any way to hasten the process?

No; it will come all right as you grow. You are only an infant, just now.

December 7, 1936

Guru, yes, unfortunately I am an infant. But is infancy the reason, really? I thought it is a question of opening of some inner channel that is the secret? If that opens or is opened up, then the infant can grow old in a day.

There you are illegitimately changing the metaphor. What has a channel to do with infancy and old age? You are doing in prose what you don't want J. to do in poetry.

J. you know, was no better than an infant and she ran equal with me in poetry, didn't she? All of a sudden see where she is!

Because there are infants and infants. Some grow quick, others slowly.

She has not only caught the animal whole and alive, but most marvellously and rapidly, while I have not been able to catch even a hair of the tail!

My dear sir, she let the inspiration through and didn't mind whether she understood it or not — or at least if she did mind, it didn't stop her from pulling it.

She has written 4 sonnets today, and each one better than my single production of 2 or 3 days' labour! How?

Because of your mind which is active.

Next, what about Dilip? He flourished like anything in so short a time.

That was his vital, vigour and confidence. As for you, you refuse to enthuse.

No, Sir, the mystery is rather a little deeper, methinks. If you so wanted, this instant you could make me more than an infant.

Have to work under the conditions you offer me.

I began this poem night before last, wrote 3 stanzas quickly, but had to stop, as it was rather late. Perhaps I should have finished it then somehow, as the flow was coming?

Yes, not good to stop the flow, unless you have got to the stage when you are sure of picking it up again.

By the way, I am thinking of reading some more English poems to be able to write better.

It should certainly be a helpful thing.

So shall I devote the afternoon to reading instead of writing?

Unless you feel a sudden inspiration. Then throw the book aside and write.

December 8, 1936

It is really a little difficult for me to understand how the mind comes in the way, for I seem to think that whatever comes down I jot down.

Well, but why doesn't it come down like a cataract as in J's case or as a flood in Dilip's?

Of course, I want to see also if any better things are possible.

See how? If better things come, it is all right; but if you try to find out better things, then that is mental activity.

But if you say whatever comes should be transcribed, I don't know. For I have to wait and wait for an expression.

Waiting is all right.

Should one then keep absolutely silent and go on waiting for the things to drop?

What else then is to be done? To hunt about for them? If so, you are likely to put in any damned thing, imagining it is better.

If you say my mind is active, I should think Dilipda's mind is no less so.

He often says, "This has flowed through me." How could it if the mind were active? I suppose you mean by mind the transcribing agency? I don't mean the receiving mind. The receiving mind must be passive.

Can you not complete that sentence: "You refuse to enthuse"?

Yes, you say you take no pleasure or joy in your poetry.

Lack of enthusiasm? All right, I shall work and work in whichever way you advise, sitting on depressions and despondency.

That is not what I mean by enthusing. I mean by it the joy of the inspiration both as it is coming and afterwards.

If you think the afternoon has importance because it will be better for you to give Force, I shall write then — only Force is necessary for me.

No importance. Force can come at any time.

I shall put in plenty of vigour. About confidence I can't promise yet, for it is my conviction that I haven't stuff enough as they have.

It is a psychological condition, attitude or whatever you like to call it that you must get into, still, compact, receptive, vibrant to the touch when it comes.

December 14, 1935

Why should joy be a necessary precondition for writing poetry?

Art is a thing of beauty and beauty and Ananda are closely connected, they go toge-

ther. If the Ananda is there, then the beauty comes out more clearly—if not, it has to struggle out painfully and slowly. That is quite natural.

I will put in any amount of labour and that should be enough.

Labour is not enough for the things to pour down. What is done with labour only is done with difficulty, not with a downpour. The joy in the labour must be there for a free outflow. You have very queer psychological ideas, I must say.

How can I have any joy when what I write seems such poor stuff and delivered with much perspiration?

That is your confounded nature. How can the man of sorrows feel joy in anything or any self-confidence? His strain is “Oh how miserable am I! Oh how dark am I! Oh how worthless is all that I do,” etc., etc.

But apart from the M of S, you seem to suffer from a mania of self-depreciatory criticism. Many artists and poets have that; as soon as they look at their work they find it awfully poor and bad. (I had that myself often varied with the opposite feeling. Arjava also has it); but to have it while writing is its most excruciating degree of intensity. Better get rid of it if you want to write freely.

But I get a lot of joy reading X's poetry—I can't describe it.

I suppose it is because it is what Housmann calls pure poetry — stirs with joy the solar plexus.

Where you marked so many fine lines in my last poem, I had hardly felt the thrill while writing them.

That's the pity of it.

December 28, 1936

How to avoid J's influence in poetry and strike out a new path? I am afraid I won't be able to write at all.

As usual, anticipating trouble and misery! Your position is always “That's got to be done. Oh *what* a bother! I shall never do it.” While it should be, “Ah that's to be done? All right then, it's going to be done.”

January 14, 1937

I am slightly depressed about my poetry, Guru. It seems all mind-made.

It is an extremely beautiful poem. What a grumbler you have got inside you! After writing a thing like that, you ought to be licking your lips in satisfaction....

January 15, 1937

About "licking lips", I shall perorate tomorrow.

It is the licked or the unlicked lips that are going to be vocal?

January 18, 1937

You have asked me to send a petition to my Inspiration, but why when the Inspiration is your Supramental Self?

Excuse me, no. This is not supramental poetry—so the inspirer can't be my supramental Self.

January 19, 1937

Excuse you? What do you mean, Sir? You give inspiration only for supramental poetry? Startling news, Sir!

Where have I said that I give inspiration for supramental poetry? only or at all? You said that your inspirer for this or for any other poem of yours was my supramental self. I reply that it can't be, because the supramental self would produce or inspire supramental poetry—and yours is not that, nor, I may add, is J's or Dilip's or my own or anybody's.

We fondly believe that you give the inspiration, set apart a time for it, and now you say that you are not the Inspirer.

I say that my supramental Self is not the inspirer—which is a very different matter.

Pray tell me the mystery. Why shirk the responsibility now, because a surrealist poem has come out? You are responsible for it, I think.

Excuse me, no. As the Gita says, the Lord takes not on himself the good or the evil deeds (or writings) of any. I may send a force of inspiration, but I am not res-

possible for the results.

But did you seriously mean that I should send a petition? How to do it though?

Not very seriously. I was only afraid that you might land us in the poetry of the 22nd century—and that might be a long time to wait for somebody to understand us.

All that I do is to remember you and call for your help, and whatever comes I jot down. If I am not to do this, tell me then what to do?

No need to do anything, but continue.

Really, Sir, this disclaimer of yours is terribly mysterious; the more I think of it the more I am puzzled.

But there was no disclaimer. I simply got my supramental self out of the way and left the brunt to be borne by my non-supramental self.

All this time we have known, believed and prayed that you give us the inspiration and suddenly this?

Suddenly what? My statement that your poetry is not supramental? Surely you did not think it was!

Please give a satisfactory reply; otherwise this dread will haunt me whenever I take up pen and paper.

Rubbish! There is nothing to dread.

January 20, 1937

You have relieved us by your answer. But I thought you have only one Self—the Overmental or the Supramental.

Why do you suppose me to be so poor in selves? When everybody has several, I must content myself with one?

Who is this "I" who sends the Force—which aspect, I mean?

"I" is a pronoun only—the Multifarious One.

It would be a pity to stop writing poetry till the 22nd century, if you had to wait for

people to understand it. That would be unyogic.

From one standpoint. From the other the prudence of postponing for the fitting century might be classed under योग: कर्मसु कौशलम् [Yoga is skill in works]. It would certainly be unpoetic.

What have you opined about that bizarre poem—"Good" or "Grand"? What's the word?

It was good. I forgot that you didn't like "good" poetry, only "fine" and even "very fine". Let us then promote it to "fine", but stop short of "grand".

I can just make out the curve of r. Please solve, and soothe me a little.

You are wrong; the "r" curve was conspicuous by its absence. Perhaps I was trying to write in a certain kind of modern English style "groud"="really good".

I wrote a very beautiful poem but I can't show it to you, for it was done in sleep and I have lost it. Pity, isn't it?

Great pity.

January 21, 1937

How can one like "good"? To you good, fine, extremely fine, may be all equal.

Generally one likes good things and dislikes bad things. But you seem to dislike both, which is more Yogic in samata (of a negative kind) than my attitude.

Only if I had been your critic in your pre-Divine days and pronounced "good" about your poetry, I would have liked to see your reactions!

My reaction would depend on whether it agreed with my estimate or not. If all my poetry were pronounced good by an undeniable authority I should be very pleased and perhaps even might lapse from Yogic heights into egoism.

Like "good", I like "fine" less than "very fine" and "exceedingly fine", obviously.

In that case, you must dislike very fine poetry also and plump for the exceedingly fine only, but can any poet always and in every line and poem be exceeding?

I don't see how fine, very fine, exceedingly fine, can be placed on the same level, or

how you expect us to like them equally.

They may not be on the same level but they are all admirable—and good in its own way is admirable too.

Of course if while saying only fine, you keep within yourself the remark, exceedingly, it will be all the same to you. I can't see your within, Sir ! "It is good, not bad etc." shows on the very face of it what it is.

Well, but I can't be always turning my inside outside with a mathematical precision—especially at a first reading in a gallop. I put an impression or rather dash it down as it comes and it seems to drop a "very" in the process or a good drops in=fine. In any case "good" does not mean "bad" or "poor".

I want to know from what angle you see and judge—subject matter, poetry, plane, consciousness or what ? Some say you give good remarks to encourage people.

I don't see and judge like that. I feel. I have said it is an impression—not an analysis. For an analysis I have to consider, look at all points of view, analyse, synthetise—no time for all that.

Can one write poems from the same source and yet express different ideas in different ways ? Or should one strike a different source ?

If you want to go to the same field quite allowable—but a different source in the same field gives a greater originality e.g. in the poem of tonight you did that.

(To be continued)

OM

A VISION ON 13 MARCH 1981

THE background is sometime before the Mother left her physical body. A film was being shown at the playground. It was "Bhakta Dhruva". The Mother was present at the show.

The scene came in which Bhakta Dhruva is sitting under a tree and chanting the mantra "Om Namō Narayanaya" with a great aspiration in his heart. As he goes on repeating it, he passes into deep meditation.

Suddenly one felt the whole playground was filled with a deep, vast and immobile silence. The Mother also seemed to be in a trance. Her face was radiating a divine peace. Her lips were constantly moving and those who were near could hear her uttering the same mantra in a sweet and melodious voice almost inaudible.

Next day the news of this spread in the whole Ashram. A member of the Ashram made a slight change in the wordings of the Mantra, and with the help of some sadhikas gifted with musical talent and sweet voices made a tape-recording of the mantra-japa, and submitted it to the Mother.

The Mother heard the recording and was very pleased. She had it played several times. The changed Mantra was as follows.

"Om Namō Bhagavate Sri Arvindaya."

An old sadhak who had been very close to the Mother related this interesting incident to a friend of mine and that friend told me about it two days back.

I too was present when that picture was being shown and I had felt the full impact of that mantra of Dhruva on the atmosphere of the playground. A vivid memory of the spiritual atmosphere thus created came to my mind now.

On 13 March at 2 a.m. when I started my usual meditation I was irresistibly caught by that mahamantra and I went on chanting 'Om Namō Bhagavate Sri Arvindaya' continuously. My whole being got charged with the fire of a great aspiration and an intense devotion. I went into a deep meditation for more than an hour.

My mind became absolutely still like a waveless sea. There were no thoughts at all. A vast silence descended over the whole universe. The whole universe appeared to be in a state of meditation.

Peace, peace, peace, oceanic peace enveloped all creation and in that peace was heard the non-stop reverberating subtle sound of "Om", slowly pervading all the world and there was a flood of golden light everywhere.

In the deep silence of the Cave of the heart a fire was seen burning upwards to heaven.

The inner consciousness was awakened and it rose up to higher and higher states.

All the inner centres, opened up as lotus buds open in the sun, and they were flooded with light from above.

The nectar of immortality started dropping down from the thousand-petalled

lotus which had fully opened out its petals at the top of the head! There was a feeling that a great obstruction at the top of the head had got removed, and immediately thereafter the golden light from above flooded the whole being. Now, everywhere there was nothing but the golden light, inside and out.

The delightful Divine Presence pervading the whole atmosphere was unmistakable.

This experience of divine Grace was felt as something very concrete and very clear.

The light, the delight and the sound, which were at first distinct and separate, now combined into a single deep divine consciousness.

The golden light descended further into the dark cavern of the dense Inconscient and lit up that entire field. The Inconscient was transformed into a consciousness full of the divine white light, and there too the concrete divine Presence was felt. There was a revelation that the Inconscient itself was nothing but the Divine who had assumed that form for the purposes of the play of creation.

In a few minutes the whole scene changed. There appeared to the vision the divine golden compassionate form of Sri Aurobindo exuding Grace, Love and golden Light. Then appeared our Mother in her most wonderful golden form of divine beauty, radiating Light and Bliss.

A little later the Mother's form merged in the form of Sri Aurobindo and became One with it. Then Sri Aurobindo also disappeared from the vision leaving behind an all-pervading Supreme Silent Consciousness of Sat, Chit and Ananda. In the nerves as well as in all the pores of my body ran a strong current of divine Ananda. My heart was full of Ananda.

The meditation stopped when I heard some sound. It was 4.30 a.m. As the experience was something very concrete and lasted for a fairly long duration, its effect continued afterwards for the whole day.

GANGADHAR

A Note on the Mantra

1. The Mantra is the divine himself in sound-form. So by repeating the Mantra with a great aspiration and devotion one is bound to get the experience of the Divine, especially if the mantra is given by a person who has realised the Divine in himself, and has charged the mantra with his divine power.

2. That which is the Absolute, the Formless and the Nameless, which is without beginning and end, which at the same time manifests itself in name and form in the different universes, which is also the Master of all existences, who is seeing to the proper functioning of the innumerable universes according to the eternal laws, who creates, preserves and withdraws into himself all these universes continually through the aeons, as his eternal play, is spoken of by the ancient Vedas and Hindu Shastras as Sriman Narayana.

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

(Continued from the issue of July 1981)

6

I WAS faced by the question: "If we find someone standing against a truth and attacking it by using falsehood as his means, what in that case should be the mental attitude of a sadhak? Should he, practising his yogic equality, be indifferent to it or lift his sword against the falsehood?" The question came up because some person wrote a letter attacking the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. We were much excited by it and hotly discussed what our attitude should be towards such persons—should we at all keep any contact with them? I was in two minds—perhaps there should not be so strong a feeling of hostility or contempt. One of us asserted very forcefully that far from keeping no contact with such persons, even conciliation was never out of the question. So I wrote to Sri Aurobindo about it, fully supporting that speaker's view.

This is what Sri Aurobindo answered:

"No doubt hatred and cursing are not the proper attitude. It is true that to look upon all things and all people with a calm and clear vision, to be uninvolved and impartial in one's own judgement is a quite proper yogic attitude. A condition of perfect *samata* can be established in which one sees all as equal, friends and enemies included, and is not disturbed by what men do or by what happens. The question is whether this is all that is demanded from us. If so, then the general attitude will be one of a neutral indifference to everything. But the Gita which strongly insists on a perfect and absolute *samata* goes on to say, 'Fight, destroy the adversary, conquer.' If there is no kind of general action wanted, no loyalty to Truth as against Falsehood except for one's personal sadhana, no will for the Truth to conquer, then the *samata* of indifference will suffice. But here there is a work to be done, a Truth to be established against which immense forces are arrayed, invisible forces which can use visible things and persons and actions for their instruments. If one is among the disciples, the seeker of this Truth, one has to take sides for the Truth, one has to stand against the Forces that attack it and seek to stifle it. Arjuna wanted not to stand for either side, to refuse any action of hostility even to the assailants; Sri Krishna who insisted so much on *samata*, strongly rebuked his attitude and insisted on his fighting the adversary, 'Have *samata*,' he said, 'and seeing clearly the Truth, fight.' Therefore to take sides with the Truth and to refuse to concede anything to the Falsehood that attacks, to be unflinchingly loyal and against the hostiles and the attackers is not inconsistent with equality. It is personal and egoistic feeling that has to be thrown away; hatred and vital ill-will have to be rejected. But loyalty and refusal to com-

promise with the assailants and the hostiles or to dally with their ideas and demands and say 'After all we can compromise with what they ask from us,' or to accept them as companions and our own people—these things have a great importance. If the attack were a physical menace to the Mother and the work and the Ashram, one would see this at once. But because the attack is of a subtler kind, can a passive attitude be right? It is a spiritual battle inward and outward—by neutrality and compromise or even passivity one may allow the enemy Forces to pass and crush down the Truth and its children. If you look at this point you will see that if the inner spiritual equality is right, the active loyalty and firm taking of sides which 'K' insists on is as right, and the two cannot be incompatible.

"I have of course treated it as a general question apart from all particular cases or personal questions. It is a principle of action that has to be seen in its right light and proportion." 13.9.1936

I wanted to know the difference between consciousness and transformation in detail and I got this reply:

"Your statement of the different parts of the being as you experience them is perfectly correct and well-observed, and it shows too that your experience of these things is not merely mental but genuine and living. As for your question about consciousness and transformation: the answer is that consciousness is made up of two elements, awareness of self and things and forces and conscious power. Awareness is the first thing necessary, you have to be aware of things in the right consciousness, in the right way, seeing them in their truth, but awareness by itself is not enough. There must be a Will and Force that makes the consciousness effective. Somebody may have the full consciousness of what has to be changed, what has to go and what has to come in its place but may be helpless to make the change. Another may have the will-force but for want of the right awareness may be unable to apply it in the right way at the right place. The advantage of being in the psychic consciousness is that you have the right awareness and its will being in harmony with the Mother's will, you can call in the Mother's Force to make the change. Those who live in the mind and in the vital are not so well able to do this; they are obliged to use mostly their personal effort and as awareness and will-force of mind and vital are divided and imperfect, the work done is imperfect and not definitive. It is only in the supermind that Awareness, Will, Force are always one movement and automatically effective."

Once I approached two respected and thoughtful sadhaks who had a considerable knowledge and whose views carried a special weight and wanted to know from them where was the true difference between intellect, intellectual and intelligence. They explained it very well, but I found that they held two different views while I was quite ignorant. Therefore, though the difference was clear, the matter as a whole remained indistinct. I had to write to Sri Aurobindo. From his reply I could make out where precisely was my mistake. He wrote:

"X asked me the question and I answered it on the basis of the current meaning

of 'intellect' and 'intellectual'. People in ordinary speech do not make any distinction between intellect and intelligence, though of course it is quite true that a man may have a good or even a fine intelligence without being an intellectual. But ordinarily all thinking is attributed to the 'intellect', an intellectual therefore is a man whose main business or activity is to think about things—a philosopher, a poet, a scientist, a critic of art and literature or of life are all classed together as intellectuals. A theorist on economy and politics is an intellectual, a politician or financier is not, unless he theorises on his own subject or is a thinker on another.

"Y's distinction is based on those I have made here, but these distinctions are not current in ordinary speech, except one or two and those even in a very imperfect way. If I go by these distinctions then the intellectuals will no longer be called intellectuals but thinkers and creators—except a certain class of them. Intellectual or intellectual thinker will then be one who is a thinker by his reason or mainly by his reason—e.g. Bertrand Russell, Bernard Shaw, Wells etc. Tagore thinks by vision, imagination, feeling and intuition, not by the reason—at least that is true of his writings. C.R. Das himself would not be an intellectual—in politics, literature and everything else he was an 'intuitive' and 'emotive' man. But, as I say, these would be distinctions not ordinarily current. In ordinary parlance Tagore, Das, and everybody of the kind would all be called intellectuals also. The general mind does not make these subtle distinctions, it takes things in the mass roughly—and it is right in doing so, for otherwise it would lose itself altogether.

"As for barristers etc. a man to succeed as barrister must have legal knowledge, and the power to apply it. It is not necessary that he should be a thinker even on his own subject or an intellectual. It is the same with all professional men,—doctors, engineers etc. etc.; they may be intellectual as well as successful in their profession, but they need not be.

"P.S. Argument properly speaking needs some power of logical intellect: but it can be specialised in a certain line. The power of argument does not by itself make a man intellectual."

I was then suffering from insomnia. For nights and days together I could not get a wink of sleep. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo had done a lot, thought about it and written many letters full of love and affection. One day, I went to see the Mother. Oh, that day is still fresh in my mind—she went on looking at me in a manner that baffles description—there was so much tenderness, softness, and deep compassion in that incomparable look! Keeping her eyes fixed on mine, with the sweetest voice, slowly she said, "I want you to sleep." My eyes kept gazing at her eyes till they were filled with tears. Nor did it end here. Next day Sri Aurobindo wrote:

"Mother said you looked rather thin and pulled down. Is it only the absence of sleep or are you eating too little? You said you had hunger—if so you ought to eat well, because underfeeding is not good for the nerves." 15.3.1935

Even after such letters replete with solicitude and sweetness, when the insomnia was once again on the increase, Sri Aurobindo wanted me to have some medical treat-

ment. But I misunderstood his well-meant advice and refused it; I thought he was pushing me away from him. His reply given below will speak of the reaction of my mind born of that misunderstanding.

“It was precisely out of solicitude for you because the suffering of insomnia and the spasms had been excessive that I proposed to you to take the help of treatment. It is a fact of my experience that when the resistance in the body is too strong and persistent, it can help to take some aid of physical means as an instrumentation for the Force to work more directly on the body itself; for the body then feels itself supported against the resistance from both sides, by means both physical as well as supraphysical. The Mother’s Force can work through both together. It is surprising that you should take my suggestion in this way as if it meant an abandonment and refusal to help you! But it is still more surprising that you should have taken Mother’s smile at Pranam for sarcasm! The only thing she put in it was an insistence for the cloud that she saw covering the body-consciousness and interfering with its receptivity to lift. You must not allow this clouding attack to come between your mind and the Mother. Reject these distorting suggestions and keep its openness so that it may help to reopen up a full receptivity in the material body also. If you do not like to take any treatment, I shall try to manage without that if you keep me informed every day without fail, even on those days you feel relieved, till all trace of the attack is over!” 1.9.1936

Many moods and forms have I seen of my clouded mind. There is a letter from Sri Aurobindo in reply to one such sample:

“I see that you have not sent your book, nor any letter and I am told you did not come to Pranam. Are you then determined to reject us and our help and shut yourself up in your despondency?

“But what is the reason for so violent a change? The Mother and myself at least have not changed towards you and the causes you alleged for feeling otherwise are so small and trifling that they could not support any such idea once you looked at them straight...

“There remains the difficulty of your sadhana. But you have had much more violent difficulties and downfalls and recovered from them and found your way clearer. Why should now a recrudescence of certain movements which you yourself say was slight or the sense of the difficulty of overcoming egoism (which everybody feels and not only yourself) lead to such persistence in despair and a turning away from help and light?

“I hope you will gather yourself together, make an effort and get out of this groove quickly into the joy and love of the Divine which you had before. On our side nothing is changed—the love and help are there as before and I hope you will feel them behind these few lines.” 9.11.1933

The day I received this letter, everything in me melted along with the tears that poured from my eyes.

(To be continued)

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

Foreword

THE MOTHER encouraged me to write this book and graciously gave her blessings and the constant support of her Force. So in telling the Story I have trusted throughout to the inspiration from the Mother and also felt Sri Aurobindo's Presence and help.

The Story of a Soul runs from 1955 to 1973. It is, in fact, an autobiography and divided into five volumes.

Naturally, the most valuable feature of it is all that has come from the hand of the Mother herself. First, there are her letters. With the most humble gratitude I may record what she has said to me:

“You are the only person in the world to whom I have written so many letters.”

There are also a few of her sketches out of six hundred, and her talks regarding both spirituality and art. She has seen my reports of the talks and made corrections wherever necessary.

She taught me painting and promised to lead me to “the highest artistic consciousness”. She dealt mainly with spirituality and art but also, in a fair measure, with various other subjects related to several spheres of life.

When the autobiography comes out in book-form, I shall include a number of facsimiles of her letters as well as her messages to me and some facsimiles of note-book pages with her corrections. Some of her sketches will be there, along with three colour-plates—one of them the Mother's own painting, which she did in front of me, of the flower Hibiscus signifying “Divine Grace—Thy goodness is infinite. We bow before Thee in gratitude.”

The Story of a Soul contains, too, extracts from spiritual diaries in which day-to-day experiences, aspirations, prayers, visions and dreams are recorded. These extracts were seen and blessed by the Mother. My constant turning to her for help and guidance is here expressed. The impact intended is that of realities directly experienced.

I have been quite frank about my weaknesses, defects, difficulties and struggles, my revolts against the Truth and the dreadful attacks of the hostile forces, and have told how the Mother's Grace and Love saved me miraculously in spite of severe ordeals and tremendous falls.

I have also shown how she shapes and develops our consciousness. And, of course, her living Presence has been there all the time to see her child through and guide it towards the supreme goal.

In my narrative it will be observed how the characters I have encountered during my life were only instruments of various forces that came to help or hinder my progress. No personal significance, however, need be attached to the characters concerned, as most human beings are unconscious instruments of World Forces.

The Mother's letters and talks will be found to indicate what would take place in my inner and outer life in future. All that she said is coming true step by step. Not only about my future but about the future of the whole world which she has visioned and willed.

Wherever anything from the writing of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother has struck me as particularly illuminating the occasions and events with which I have dealt, I have quoted it. The Mother herself used to refer me many a time to her own works as well as Sri Aurobindo's, in order to enlighten me apropos of her talks with me.

When the outline of *The Story of a Soul* was read out to the Mother by M. André—the Mother's son—on the 5th October 1972, she wrote a Message which conveys everything.

I am profoundly grateful to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

HUTA

The Mother's Message

This is the interesting Story of how a being discovers the Divine Life.

Nolinida's Introduction

It is a beautiful book well-written, elevating, illuminating, inspiring. To read the book is to come close to the Mother—into her arms.

I.

"I will pour delight from thee as from a jar,
 I will whirl thee as my chariot through the ways,
 I will use thee as my sword and as my lyre,
 I will play on thee my minstrelsies of thought.
 And when thou art vibrant with all ecstasy,
 And when thou liv'st one spirit with all things,
 Then will I spare thee not my living fires,
 But make thee a channel for my timeless force.
 My hidden presence led thee unknowing on
 From thy beginning in earth's voiceless bosom
 Through life and pain and time and will and death,
 Through outer shocks and inner silences
 Along the mystic roads of Space and Time
 To the experience which all Nature hides.
 Who hunts and seizes me, my captive grows:
 This shalt thou henceforth learn from thy heart-beats.
 For ever love, O beautiful slave of God!
 O lasso of my rapture's widening noose,
 Become my cord of universal love."

SRI AUROBINDO, *Savitri*, Centenary Edition Volume 29, pp. 701-702

During the night of the 25th July 1954, these lines echoed incessantly in my heart. I fell in love with Savitri—the Supreme Mother.

A few disciples of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo had come to our house in Miwani (Kenya), East Africa. We had all gathered together and started prayer, meditation and reading. What was read was *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo's spiritual epic. I was fascinated and felt within me that the Mother herself was reading it to me and making me understand.

On all sides cataracts of divine light and peace seemed to fall and in this wonderful atmosphere it was as if my soul had come out of its body and begun floating.

Here I recall how, after I had come to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, I had a concrete experience in my sleep that the Mother was reciting *Savitri*. I heard distinctly her melodious voice and experienced intensely the soothing warmth of her Presence.

I recounted this dream-vision to the Mother. She said:

"Yes, indeed, I recited *Savitri* to you and it was passages from *Book Eleven—The Book of Everlasting Day*—the conversation between the Supreme Lord and Savitri."

Then she gave me her lovely smile—the smile which was so much a part of her. I was thrilled.

After years the Mother physically recited *Savitri* to me and I tape-recorded it. I was working with her on the Poem, doing oil-paintings of it under her direct guidance. Everything was marvellously arranged by her Grace!

On the night of the 25th July, I determined to relinquish the ordinary life and embrace the Divine Life.

Ever since my childhood I had been aspiring to realise the Supreme Truth and the Supreme Love.

Nobody in the past had understood my feeling, nobody now knew of my final decision. I had felt like a stranger in a dark world, searching for the one who could truly lead me to my goal.

I had met many Saints, Sadhus and Sannyasis, I had read numberless religious books, including several on the Vaishnava denomination to which I belonged. But inwardly I felt: “Not that, not that.”

Thus years went by. I had almost lost all hope. My heart cried desperately to the Supreme Lord: “Is there any existence of the Divine in this world of falsehood? Is there any Truth here? If not, then what am I living for? If my aspiration is true and sincere, then reveal to me that Truth, O Lord...”

Till the end of 1954 I had still not seen the Mother. Yet something within had been guiding me towards something beyond:

“The unfelt Self within who is the guide,
The unknown Self above who is the goal.”

Savitri, p. 168

At that time I used to write prayers in my diary in Gujarati, addressing the Divine Mother. Afterwards I translated them into English and now they are published in book-form under the title of *Salutations*. Here is an example of how I expressed my feelings in the prayers:

“From day to day the pull towards You is constant. Today I have asked myself: When shall I put my head in Your lap and renew my age-long relation with you, dispel my sorrows and confusions of years and dedicate my whole life to You?”

Days passed, slipping into weeks and months, with ups and downs. At last I was able to make the journey from Africa to Pondicherry for a short stay. Then, on the morning of the 1st November 1954, I saw the Mother sitting radiant in a high chair which was in the Meditation Room downstairs, in the house where She lived. She was giving blessings and handing everybody a message. The message was from Sri Aurobindo and was now made applicable to Pondicherry's *de facto* merger with the

Indian Union in that year:

“A free and united India will be there and the Mother will gather around her her sons and weld them into a single national strength in the life of a great and united people.”

With slow footsteps I approached her. My heart started beating a shade faster. Comforting vibrations came like waves and swept over my whole being. While I was receiving the message a powerful spark from her divine touch left me completely lost in her luminosity, peace and joy—I forgot to look at her!

In the afternoon I went to the Mother again. This time she was in the “Prosperity Room,” giving fragrant leaves—Sweet Marjoram—to people. She had assigned a significance to the leaves: “New Birth—Birth to the true consciousness, that of the Divine Presence in us.” She always gave significances to flowers by entering into their consciousness and getting vibrations of their being. She gave various flowers to people according to their spiritual needs and, of course, the flowers themselves express what is to be expressed.

Every 1st of the month the Mother went to the Prosperity Room in order to give her blessings to Ashramites to start the new month. At the same time, they were handed their monthly requirements.

This time I looked at the Mother and our eyes met in utter silence, and it was as if our souls had embraced, so deep, so intimate was our meeting. I felt instantly that here was the ONE who could help me, here was SHE who could release me from the dreadful quandary in which I had found myself all those years. Then my heart whispered: “Yes, this is the Truth and the Love I have been seeking and aspiring for.” Her powerful eyes and sweet smile captured my whole self.

“Suffering was lost in her immortal smile.”

Savitri, p. 314

Now my soul was at rest—it had found its home at last...

“As might a soul fly like a hunted bird,
Escaping with tired wings from a world of storms,
And a quiet reach like a remembered breast,
In a haven of safety and splendid soft repose
One could drink life back in streams of honey-fire,
Recover the lost habit of happiness...”

Savitri, p. 15

Once again, in the evening I saw the Mother in the Playground when she distributed sweets to people after they had marched past, finished the more elaborate mar-

ching and then done a collective concentration for a few minutes. We smiled at each other. Then I bowed down at her feet in order to offer myself to her. She fondled my head tenderly, and at that moment I felt the perfect Love, for she is THAT. I knew within my true self that we had known and loved each other for countless ages. Her perfect Love caught me up to burn and shine through my whole being. I could scarcely credit my luck. Everything in the world seemed totally unimportant.

Here I cannot resist recalling the day—1st September 1966—when the Mother gave me an exquisite birthday card with a big orange-red rose painted on it. These lines accompanied it:

“With my blessings for your aspiration to lead your entire being to your goal:
“Love manifested in Truth, and with Sri Aurobindo I say, ‘For ever Love’.”

After a few moment’s concentration she pointed to the rose and said:

“This means *tendresse* in French. But it is not tenderness. It is an individual love—it means deep love, sweet care, intensity of compassion.

“My child, when I was writing this card, I came to know that it is for ages that I have been loving you.”

Her words were at once like jewels set in my heart.

I said with a smile: “Mother, I too have felt the same ever since I saw you.”

She nodded and smiled.

The Mother gave the significance to the orange rose:

“Flaming love for the Divine—Ready for all heroism and sacrifice.”

*

I thoroughly enjoyed my stay in the Ashram. I did not waste my time. Within a few days I stitched a dress for the Mother. During my work I felt more and more confident of the final victory of my soul.

On Wednesday the 10th November I was fortunate enough to have an interview with the Mother in the Playground. It was a quiet, pleasant evening. I entered the Interview Room which was filled with a heavenly atmosphere and was profoundly peaceful. I could hear my heart-beats distinctly.

The Mother sat in a chair and was wearing the white dress which I had made for Her. Her feet in white *tabi* rested on a footstool. She received me cordially, and asked me to sit near her feet. Then she put a pretty gold chain round my neck—the very chain she had formerly worn round one of her ankles for several years. She held my hands and looked intently into my eyes for a few seconds. The sweet warmth of her proximity and her delicate perfume enveloped me. Tears welled up in my eyes and a

prayer came from the depth of my heart: "Liberate me...."

She was touched by that cry of the soul. Her expression changed, her eyes became more bright and powerful. Then slowly she lifted her left hand and pressed it on my head. I felt as if the whole world was revolving round me at high speed, and keen vibrations spread throughout my body. I forgot my existence for a few moments and merged in her divinity. I knew from this unforgettable experience how one feels when one unites with the Supreme. I felt a little dizzy. Slowly I raised my eyes to her glorious face. The Mother's expression now changed once again. Her eyes were actually a shade between blue and grey, but they seemed to change their colours with her mood and expression. I loved her blue-grey eyes, which showed sovereign knowledge, sympathy and tenderness.

She asked me with concern:

"Are you going back? Wouldn't you like to stay here?"

I answered: "Yes, I would. But I think I must go back for the present. Will you please call me as soon as possible? For, I would really love to stay near you."

She replied with assurance:

"Yes, my child...."

I drew a long silent breath of relief. She took a handful of highly fragrant jasmines from the tray which had been set on a small table near her chair, and gave them to me. Then taking my hands in hers, she said affectionately:

"Write to me through Dyuman."

And with a broad smile, she bade me "Au revoir."

In my room at Golconde—one of the Ashram's Guest-houses, a very beautiful structure answering to the Mother's own plan—I contemplated on all that the Mother had given and said to me. It was close to midnight and I was sitting all alone with rain beating outside. My eyes too had their own little rain.

Now my soul was charged with her Force and ready for the future. I had to go because circumstances necessitated my return. Before meeting the Mother I had been forced to get married according to our Indian custom. So I had married in Bombay towards the end of 1953 without any feeling—marriage had held no meaning for me. I shall say no more about it—there is really nothing to say except that I have not led a married life at all.

Next morning, before I left for Bombay with my husband, the Mother sent me her book, *Prayers and Meditations*, with her blessings. I opened it and my glance fell on her introductory words:

“Some give their soul to the Divine, some their life, some offer their work, some their money. A few consecrate all of themselves and all they have—soul, life, work, wealth; these are the true children of God. Others give nothing—these, whatever their position, power and riches, are for the Divine purpose valueless cyphers.

“This book is meant for those who aspire for an utter consecration to the Divine.”

In my heart I felt strongly that I would surely come back.

*

“The Divine calls the soul to the joy of rising Light.”

The Mother, *White Roses*, Old Edition, Parts I, II & III p. 36.

On Thursday the 10th February 1955 at 5 a.m. I abandoned the ordinary world without any regret. Escaping from the net of circumstances encompassing me was not so easy. If the Mother's Strength and Force had not been with me I would surely have failed.

From Bombay I had to go to Calcutta.

On my last night in Calcutta a curious incident took place. I was cooking on a gas-ring. Suddenly the flames spurted up. They would have enveloped me and burnt me entirely—especially as my long hair was down and within reach.

My servant who saw what was happening was surprised that I escaped. The situation was such that hardly anybody could have remained unscathed.

Obviously, here was an attack of subtle hostile forces to prevent an aspirant from reaching the Mother's feet.

I came all alone from Calcutta to Madras by plane.

My husband was under the impression that I was going to Pondicherry on the Mother's birthday and would return to him.

When my plane touched down at Madras, I was completely blank. A taxi had been arranged by a man who did the Ashram's work in Madras. Two persons whose looks made me shudder accompanied me to Pondicherry.

We left the aerodrome and crossed some five kilometers. Suddenly I asked the two men whether they had brought my suitcase, because there was a strange portmanteau beside me. I thought it belonged to one of these persons. They told me that they thought the portmanteau belonged to me, and that was all they had put in the car.

I asked them to go back to the airport. When we reached there, I saw beside the counter an old European lady fuming with rage, her face twitching all over. She had my suitcase in front of her. With the permission of the authorities I took my suitcase and gave her her portmanteau. If she had been contented with my suitcase, she would have benefited a great deal. For, I had filled it with precious things, which I had wanted to offer to the Mother.

Once again we started on our journey. While looking at those men, I felt really scared, because their appearance was of sheer ruffians: big moustaches, blood-shot eyes, red handkerchiefs tied round their necks. However, they were not smoking nor did they talk roughly. That was a great relief.

I was in the back-seat, repeating the Mother's name constantly, with my eyes closed. I might have dozed off. Upon opening my eyes I saw the boundaries of Pondicherry. But I must add that those odd-looking men acted like perfect gentlemen. At the end of the drive, one of them opened the car-door, while the other removed my luggage. When I stepped out, they bowed and gave me most friendly smiles.

Ah! at last back at the Ashram. I was again accommodated in Golconde. Dyuman—one of the Mother's attendants—informed her of my arrival. She said to him:

“I will certainly keep her here.”

In the evening I went to the Playground with immense happiness in my heart, because I was to meet the Mother. Here I found everything so familiar. During the sweets-distribution, when I approached her, our eyes met and held for one timeless moment. Gently I sank down to my knees and bowed down at her feet. She caressed my hair with infinite compassion. When I stood up and looked at her, she gave an enchanting smile with a slight nod and, while giving me a toffee, pressed my hands with both of hers.

On Saturday evening the Mother saw me in the Interview Room. The whole set-up of the room was artistic. I sat near her feet. She asked me whether I was a minor. I said I was twenty-one years old. She went into a trance for a moment or two. Then she instructed me what I should write to my family explaining my departure for good. During our talk I asked her what the important points of this Integral Yoga were and what I should do. She answered sympathetically:

“Have faith in the Divine, love the Divine and develop the consciousness.”

She held my hands and assured me by patting them that she would see me through. Tears of gratitude sprang to my eyes. Suddenly I looked at my wrists and pulled off their eight gold bangles and gave them to her. They were the last of my possessions. I had offered her whatever had been mine—along with myself. Here I may mention that I did not bring a single thing which belonged to my husband or had been presented to me by my husband and my in-laws.

I sent letters to my people, my husband and my in-laws.

The Mother wrote to my eldest brother on the 20th February in spite of her heavy work due to her birthday being just the next day:

“Laljibhai,

“Where is your faith in the Divine? Having faith in the Divine you ought to rejoice that Savita has received the inner call and decided to lead the divine

life; you ought to be made happy by this sign of the Divine's Grace and feel grateful for it.

"The offering that Savita has made of herself has been accepted and from now she is no more Savita but Huta.

"Quietly face the social difficulties with equality and cheerfulness; then you will know that my love and blessings are with you."

The Mother wrote the meaning, 'The offered one', on the card which she gave me on the 17th February, bearing my new name "Huta" in both Sanskrit and English.

*

The morning of the 21st February was a delightful one. First I went to Sri Aurobindo's room. The atmosphere was marvellous. The numerous incense-sticks sent up a delicate cloud of aroma. A tastefully arranged profusion of different kinds of flowers mingled their exquisite fragrance with it.

There was his large bed and behind it a bronze bust made by an Austrian sculptress. I prayed to Sri Aurobindo silently and passed through his room and went to the front hall called the Meditation Room, where the Mother distributed a message to everyone on Darshan Days. Now too she was sitting there, beautifully clad. While handing me the message, she gazed at me for a moment and smiled. The message ran:

"Out of the paths of the morning star they came,
Forerunners of a divine multitude,
Faces that wore the immortal's glory still,
Voices that communed with the thoughts of God,
Bodies made beautiful by the Spirit's light:
The sun-eyed children of a marvellous Dawn,
The great creators with wide brows of calm,
The massive barrier-breakers of the world
And wrestlers with destiny in her lists of will,
The labourers in the quarries of the Gods,
The messengers of the Incommunicable,
The architects of Immortality.
Into the mortal's fallen sphere they came
Carrying the magic word, the mystic Fire,
Carrying the cup of Dionysian Joy,
Approaching eyes of a diviner Man,
Lips chanting an unknown anthem of the soul,
Feet echoing in the corridors of Time.
Even as man once came behind the beast,
After us there shall come a greater race,

High priests of wisdom, sweetness, might and bliss
 And runners upon beauty's sunlit ways,
 And swimmers of Love's laughing fiery floods
 And dancers within rapture's golden doors,
 Whose tread one day shall change the suffering earth
 And justify the light on Nature's face.

(An early version)

Savitri Bk. III, Canto 4

I joined the Playground group and did marching with other Sadhikas and Sadhakas.

I felt awfully embarrassed in shorts and shirt. Never before had I exposed my legs above the knees. I used to wear elegant frocks.

The evening of the 21st February, the Mother took the Salute while we marched past—to the band.

I felt as if we all were heroes and soldiers of the army of Light.

The whole day passed without any repose. I felt exhausted towards the end. Before going to sleep I opened the book *Prayers and Meditations*, which the Mother had given me. The prayer I read was written by the Mother on March 13th, 1913:

“Let the pure perfume of sanctification burn always, rising higher and higher, and straighter and straighter, like the ceaseless prayer of the integral being, desiring to unite with Thee so as to manifest Thee.”

*

In the month of March the Mother set everything right with my family, my husband and in-laws so that they never questioned me or accused me of anything. I had my divorce without any difficulty. I told my husband to get married again and be happy, because I could not make him happy. It was a great relief to me to know that now no earthly power could ever take me away from my Beloved Mother.

She gave me two photographs, one of Sri Aurobindo and one of herself—they were mounted separately in frames embroidered with gold thread.

And I took the plunge into the ocean of spirituality. I thought that now the Divine was within my reach and I was leading the Divine Life. How mistaken I was!

First of all, I understood nothing—I felt as if I had been pushed into a black, rough and dangerous sea. The hostile forces came rushing into my consciousness like huge waves and showed me all the gaps in my being in order to test my sincerity towards the Call. I sank deeper and deeper into unconsciousness. I found everything around me dark, strange, frightening and oppressive. My struggle had begun.

(To be continued)

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ON THE TERRACE

As you walk on the terrace
Fanned by the evening breeze
The palm fronds nod in assent
And a prayer rises from all trees.

Twitter and chirp of homing birds
Time the soft patter of your feet,
Blossoms of jasmine and lady of night
Their perfumes offer through a wind from the east.

I see your name displayed on blue
In hieroglyph or an unknown script
Painted in colours silver-gold
By wisps of cloud as they drift.

When you recline under blushing hibiscus
That vies in redness with the sinking discus,
The early stars look and twinkle
In wonder at your glowing face.

The moon hurries to the zenith
For a last glimpse as you stand
Face up, hands raised in thanks to Heavens
That inhabit the earth this evening hour.

As you cross the terrace and descend the stairs,
The entranced birds awake and resume
Their lullaby songs, the day is already dreaming
As the owls sit up and night starts living.

Soon, but for crickets and the wind's whisper,
The trees, sky, roads and the earth
Are quiet, in-drawn around your fading presence
That a little while ago had filled the terrace.

DINKAR

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

IN THE FREE PROGRESS METHOD OF INTEGRAL EDUCATION

“Free Progress is the progress guided by the soul and not governed by habits, conventions and preconceived ideas.”

THE MOTHER

The Aim

INTEGRAL Education aims at the fullest development of personality and, as such, has evidently at first to seek and promote the central fact of personality. The Psychic Being is that deep-laid and all-commanding central fact, essentially conscious, joyous and harmonising spiritual fact of life, which is capable of truly developing, remoulding and integrating the diverse propensities of the physical body, the ordinary impulses of life and the thinking mind, and realise a happy, harmonious and effective personality.

Sri Aurobindo's observation that the Psychic Being, if brought into the front, will take up all the job of education is unforgettable for us. The Psychic Being is indeed the most effective educator of the unruly impulses of life and the vagrancies of the mind. In a most subtle way, through a pervasive inner action, it transforms the raw wayward natural energies into a steady enlightened movement.

Integral Education is, therefore, all psychic-centered. It must intend the psychic centre, seek it ever more and allow it to play up increasingly. Integral Education has thus to be essentially evocative.

All this involves a deep self-awareness in the teacher, who intends and evokes a similar deep self-awareness in the students, in and through all the activities of the educational process. This is the basic fact for the pursuit of Integral Education.

The Externalist Posture

The ordinary life is, however, all poised externally. The posture of our consciousness is not of self-awareness, but of the awareness of the physical facts, things and persons around us. This externalist posture is persistent and constant and we begin to look upon all life as a matter of external impacts and relations and the fact of inner volition and initiative gets badly undermined. Education too under this orientation comes to be regarded as an external remoulding of life for an external adjustment with circumstances.

Recent Rise of Psychology and Education

It is only in recent times with the rise of the science of psychology and the appreciation of the inner fact of consciousness and will that education has learned to stress inner facts and elaborate a new inner discipline, the interest and initiative of the child,

the activity principle and the like. In consequence, education has tended to become less mechanical but not yet truly evocative. It has learned to recognise consciousness at its surface level. Psycho-analytical education has in addition recognised the subconscious too.

But the true secret and power of integration lies neither on the surface nor in the subconscious: it lies deep within. This great truth is no speculation, but a fact of yogic experience vividly known to Integral Education and this is the great message it has to give and demonstrate today. But it is a difficult job to do, as it involves a new basic posture of consciousness, *i.e.*, of self-awareness deep enough in the teacher along with a similar awareness regarding the students. This is our basis. Without it, Integral Education does not get its start. In fact, along with it there is also needed an awareness of Divine Presence, a Universal Transcendental Consciousness inspiring and guiding all life. These awarenesses automatically involve a capacity of silent action, which is again a great secret of life, a potent way of truly helping the student. Thus is the teacher able to invoke higher help and communicate attitudes, feelings, volitions, ideas to the students, without imposing them on them.

Free Progress Method

Free Progress Method is the great creation of the Mother, worked out in a measure at the Centre of Education at Pondicherry. Its perfect working is a thing of the future, when the teacher will be able to rise to the high demands made upon him by the Method.

If the Psychic Being is the central fact of personality and the pivot of Integral Education, then naturally we must get as clear and perfect an idea of it as possible. In some cases, in childhood it is clearly noticeable through an expression of striking inner joyfulness, simplicity, relaxation, spontaneity. But as the social consciousness gets stronger and the conventions begin to govern, it gets covered over and the earlier inner effusive joyfulness disappears. All education normally is a fortification of conventional living requiring an elaborate adjustment of life to external demands and situations. This acts suppressively on the inner consciousness of the Psychic Being.

Recent education, which is psychologically oriented, seeks to avail itself of inner activity and interests of the child, but these are of the mental and the vital nature, not of the soul, which is the true source of activity and initiative. Contemporary education today looks upon integration of personality as the aim of education. 'The whole man' and 'all round development' are so much talked about. But our best idea in this connection is summative, *i.e.*, we must cultivate emotions and will besides the intellect. What integration is, how it can be achieved, how the natural impulses are to be modified, sublimated and transformed?—these are the issues on which we do not possess clarity.

The Psychic Being, the central spiritual fact of personality, demonstrated so clearly by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, is, in fact, the secret which brings clarity to us

on these issues and opens up a new horizon in education. The Psychic Being is by nature essentially conscious, joyous and unified and, being dynamic, tends to enlighten, infuse joy and unify the diverse self-assertive impulses and the unconsciousness of nature. Its action is gentle, subtle, pervasive and intimate—from within. It re-creates the dull grosser impulses into refined conscious movements after its own nature. It thus transforms them. Being unitary, it proceeds on the basis of the good on the whole and of the whole and thus induces all around in the varied movements of thought, will and emotion a sense of harmony, peace and unity. Thus integration of personality becomes possible. The Psychic Being is, further, a fact of depth in personality and it accordingly induces a sense of depth in the superficial outward-gazing consciousness of man. It cures him of his superficiality most effectively.

However, being not attended to and cared for and being not aggressive, it recedes into the background and then its influence on the operative personality becomes much reduced.

Integral Education insists that this fact of personality is the best and the most effective educative influence and should, therefore, be our first and constant concern. We must cherish it, seek it, evoke it, strengthen it, follow its guidance and see all the joy of the educational process in the progressive self-enrichment of the child's personality under its action.

The superficial diverse impulses of the child and the grown-up student have, however, to be duly availed of and valued not by themselves as though final but in view of deeper psychic fact. The outer impulses have to become responsive to the inner guidance and learn to act accordingly.

A Rich Environment and an Inspiring Atmosphere

For this purpose, a rich, varied and varying environment is needed as nourishment for the varied superficial impulses to grow in consciousness and coordination through natural development. A good occupation for the constructive impulses is the best way of reducing the force of the negative ones. A true creation and manipulation of the environment will call for real originality, resourcefulness, inventiveness, appreciation of the changing needs of the child or the student at the hands of the teacher. We have not only to give what the curious young minds seek, but in fact stimulate ever more curiosity and seeking. All this has to be founded on an increasing self-awareness. Our ordinary education lays too exclusive an emphasis on the external and the result is loss of contact with the inner soul. Our aim, on the contrary, is to cultivate the external as an expression of the internal and as a means of discovering the internal, behind and within the external, as the true deeper fact.

However, the externalist posture of consciousness being rather strong, the evocation of the Psychic Being becomes a very difficult job. The teacher's own good self-awareness is the best immediate help in the matter. And the teacher and the taught

both get great help if the general atmosphere is duly cultivated and its spiritual quality maintained.

Now what is atmosphere as distinct from environment? And how can it be deliberately cultivated and maintained? Atmosphere is a most interesting psychological fact which exercises its influence in a very subtle way. A person in a state of anger creates around him—in immediate vicinity—an atmosphere of the like quality, so that one nearly gets the contagion of it, feels agitated and angry. A person in sorrow and depression has another atmosphere, which induces sorrow and depression in others. Similarly, through the play and exercise of the Psychic Being, we put across psychic joy, aspiration, goodwill, fellow-feeling and collaboration. And, through a sincere and persistent invocation of the Divine Presence, create a real pervasive feeling and sense of a higher reality, which exercises an uplifting influence on all who live under it and have a general openness of attitude.

The Psychic Being, as pivotal to Integral Education, will evidently need an atmosphere sympathetic to its quality of consciousness.

It is now, on the whole, recognised that institutions have their distinctive qualities of life, standards, traditions and atmospheres, but it is all too vague. Integral Education has yet to elaborate its psychological principles, but the fact of the atmosphere is its basic contribution. It is a powerful educational influence and it admits of deliberate cultivation.

Of course, one who is capable of psychic identification and a higher contact, will be able to seek and get the corresponding qualities effectively. But even the ordinary mental-vital identifications of life can through sincere and persistent aspiration and prayer get these higher qualities in a degree. That will mean ensuring the primary condition for the practice of Integral Education.

The Will to Learn and to Progress

The will to learn and to progress is the basic condition for all education, but for the Free Progress Method it is essential and indispensable. To stimulate interest in the child and the student in a field of knowledge is all the job of the teacher. One educational principle puts this fact emphatically by saying that a teacher does not need to know the subject he is to teach. He has just to stimulate interest and the student will learn it by himself. And Confucius, the great Chinese teacher, used to say that he would not teach a pupil, who when told one-fourth of a subject could not get by himself the remaining three-fourths. And an Upanishadic teacher says to his disciple about knowing Brahman, not 'Know Him as thus' but 'Aspire to know Him as thus'. He stimulates the disciple's seeking to know.

Now, our mind is largely unconscious and its curiosity and seeking to know are unsteady and weak. But the Psychic Being is essentially conscious and capable of continuous aspiration and the will to grow. It is evidently the best learner in us and capable of infusing the same spirit into the mind. An atmosphere of psychic and divine

vibrations will evidently be the most favourable condition for the will to learn and to grow and to thrive.

Discipline, Inner and Outer

Under the externalist approach, discipline would naturally be all an external control of behaviour, and "Spare the rod and spoil the child" would here be the high educational maxim. With the rise of psychology and the appreciation of the mind's capacity to check and control the unruly impulses and equal appreciation of the variety of impulses and their natures and of the harm done by the suppressive external control, discipline has acquired a new orientation. A free and full play to the constructive impulses itself works out a good organisation of life's energies and the mind's discrimination between good and bad helps to check and control. But this achieves an overall, socially passable pattern of life, not an inner unification of life's energies and capacities. Mind and the vital nature of man are inherently dualistic, involve a play of opposites, of right and wrong, of good and evil, a constitutional division and conflict. A spontaneous all-good, all-true, all-beautiful is the vision of unity and is possible only to the soul, not to the lower members of personality. And the ultimate and the real controlling and directing power also belongs to the soul, the mind can only check and hold in subjection the unruly elements. The soul, in fact, possesses transforming power. It can change the essential nature of the diverse elements of the lower members and induce unity in them.

Thus Integral Education discovers a most original and really effective quality of discipline.

According to the needs of the situation and levels of growth, discipline can really have many grades. The extreme external form of it would be physical punishment, which inflicted in reaction and anger is brutalising and anti-educational. But the same awarded calmly and with a living feeling for the good of the child, in the form of a deprivation of the social advantages as a legitimate consequence of an anti-social behaviour, can be a sound discipline when the impulses are too raw and the mind not yet helpful with a clear appreciation of what is right and what is wrong. But, ultimately, the child has to be helped to seek and learn to feel "What his soul says to an action, how the soul feels about it," and learn to enjoy the peace, the harmony and the effectivity of such guidance. This standard by itself will evoke a high seeking and give to other standards of discipline their true relative values.

Man, constitutionally, is like the animal, outward-gazing and all the time acting and reacting to the environment. But with the emergence of the thinking capacity, he becomes capable of self-consciousness. This is the distinctive evolutionary new capacity of man and all his achievements of culture and civilisation are essentially due to it. With self-consciousness goes self-organisation and self-guidance. But self-consciousness is, to begin with, a small capacity and it has to be assiduously cultivated and then self-guidance too becomes increasingly possible. As it develops, external guidance, control, direction, pressure, persuasion, rewards, praise, blame, etc., be-

come unnecessary. And they must then be steadily reduced and eliminated in order to encourage, promote and confirm self-guidance, which can be of the better vital impulses or of reason and ultimately of the soul and the Divine in one.

Physical Education in Integral Education

Physical Education is an important and an essential emphasis of Integral Education. The Mother set on it a primary value, not only for considerations of health but for the building up of character and the organisation of the wayward vital impulses of life. And the experience of the Centre of Education at Pondicherry is a clear evidence of the indispensable value of Physical Education to the growth of the integral personality. Physical Education has to be a most interesting, rich, varied and creative pursuit of life affording a large satisfaction in terms of physical health and well-being, intellectual and aesthetic joy and social harmony and strength. Physical Education in Integral Education has an original quality of its own. It is a way of training the body to live by the energies of the spirit in us and learn to draw upon the infinite energies of the Universal Spirit in the world. It is an attempt at an integration of the material with the spiritual.

Integral Education—A Pioneering Attempt

Integral Education is evidently a pioneering attempt as, for the first time in the history of education, it seeks the true spiritual values in education on a wide and a large scale. It is a most uphill task and the Free Progress Method is an essential part of it and the right quality of the teacher is the key to Integral Education as well as to the Method. It demands a spiritual quality in the teacher, a spiritual possibility in the child and the student to be able to aim at an integrated personality seriously.

Obviously, a high new quality is all the aim. We have, therefore, to work with concentration and bear in mind that the success of the educational system and the method depends upon the quality, not the quantity. Quality, once achieved, will more easily admit of expansion later on. But if we lose ourselves in quantity and miss the quality, then the system and the method do not get a fair trial.

A partial application of the system as well as the method in a general way is, however, possible. And even as such, it will show fine results, as it is actually doing at present at many places.

But it seems fit that the method be resorted to as a sincere attempt with a selection of students, who by virtue of their inner consciousness have a keen urge for knowledge, growth and progress. Similarly, teachers, who have that urge in them and voluntarily opt for the method, should experiment with it. Such teachers and such students should, as it were, organise a school of their own within the general school and carry on their work. And it should be possible to have an easy interchange of students and teachers between the two schools. If the selection of students and of

teachers and this Free Progress school are able to achieve a better quality, a higher standard of life and learning, it is bound to exercise a fine influence on the larger school and then Integral Education and the Free Progress Method will stand justified for a wider utilisation.

The Role of the Teacher

We have considered the general quality and character of Integral Education as also the essential nature of the Free Progress Method and seen also that the right quality of the teacher is essential to the working of both, more particularly to that of the Method. The teacher is the very spirit of the Method. He becomes ever more and more what he seeks the children and the students to become. He seeks to maintain in himself the consciousness he wants them to achieve. He lives at his best depth and seeks to evoke the best depth in them. He seeks knowledge, loves knowledge, enjoys knowledge and persistently evokes in his pupils curiosity and a seeking to know more and more of man, of the world and of God. He creates, from day to day, a stimulating environment of new things, new pictures, new examples, new thoughts and feelings and projects. He aspires, prays, invokes and thereby creates and sustains an inspiring atmosphere for them and himself. He maintains and feeds ever more an individual contact with each one of them as also with all of them as a class. He is ever ready to meet all their queries and stimulate further ones. He also knows how to put forth vibrations of peace and harmony when disturbances arise in the class and knows how to subdue the spirit of revolt, of recalcitrance, of defiance by a silent action of will.

A teacher's role in the Free Progress Method is indeed a very big role. Inwardly, he is all the time active, though outwardly he acts to the minimum. But that is because he has seen the vanity and futility of the ego's habit of giving instructions to others, shouting at them, suppressing things and other uneducational attitudes. He has now seen the subtle wisdom of letting life blossom forth from its inner urges under the sublime influences of the Spirit within and the Spirit above and assist in the process as best he can.

INDRA SEN

THE MOTHER'S PRESENCE

My first visit to the Ashram dates back to November 1961. When I reached Madras, I saw my friend Maganbhai V. Patel of Nadiad at the Station. He had come there from Pondicherry to receive me as it was my first visit to the Ashram. He had reached Pondicherry some days earlier.

We stayed at Devi House in the Ashram. In those days the Mother used to come out and give balcony darshan from the first floor early in the morning. I had the rare opportunity of the balcony darshan every day during my stay in Pondicherry. In addition to that, I saw her once when she alighted from her car near the entrance of the main Ashram building. It was a thrilling experience.

Then came the 24th November, 1961. It was the darshan day. We received a message from the Mother's hand. At that time her charming, beautiful and attractive eyes met my eyes. I still remember the magic of that look. Since then I have become a devotee of the Mother and will continue to be so. The Ashram atmosphere had a curious effect on my consciousness in those days. I felt a peculiar pressure on the head.

I was fortunate to have her darshan on the 15th August 1973. It was her last public appearance. She stood in her balcony on the second floor for a few minutes. The rain was pouring heavily. Generally a message used to be distributed on a darshan day. But on 15th August 1973 no message was given. It was perhaps an indication of the Mother's likely withdrawal from the body.

After the Mother had left her body on 17th November 1973 I visited the Ashram in December. I stood before the samadhi to pay homage. I was depressed and grieved as I thought, "Who will guide me now?" At that moment I saw the Mother appearing at the opposite window above and telling me, "Follow Maganbhai's advice for practical problems. Inwardly we are all one. You should not have prejudice against anyone."

Since that day the labour and burden of sadhana has been considerably reduced. The mists have rolled away and the road is more or less clear. She has dropped her material envelope but she reveals herself to devotees who are open to her. Her presence is everlasting.

HARSHAD MEHTA

FROM MOMENT TO MOMENT

A MOMENT's rest in our inner vernal wood,
Where mind invokes a far uplifted mood,
 And heart forgets all painful pangs of the past,
 Revives our wayworn tired limbs at last.

All thoughts go soaring high to planes unknown,
There currents of prophetic air are blown;
 The future comes revealing a shining face,
 And takes our present into its deep embrace.

In a flying boat on an ethereal sea,
We approach the borders of eternity;
 From planes to higher planes our dreams will fly,
 Till jubilant souls' eternal home we spy.

Our haven is always here, we did not know.
We live in God, nowhere have we to go.
 Alarmed with deluding scenes we fret and pine,
 Full soon we feel the benignant Hand divine.

No fierce demon can mar our happy days,
Immune are we from evil's fearsome gaze.
 We grow serene, our courage rises high,
 All moments bring our destination nigh.

We turn our minds from dark nocturnal dreams,
And bathed are we in supramental beams.
 Our inmost soul emerges blithesomely
 From Heaven and Earth's unmarred matrimony.

SAILEN

THE SECRET OF THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

AN AUROBINDONIAN APPROACH

(Continued from the issue of July 1981)

THE Garuḍa myth is a fascinating effort on the part of Vyāsa to dovetail the Soma-Agni-Mātariśvan concept in the Ṛigveda with that of Indra's discovering Soma in I 130.3:¹³

He discovered the treasure from heaven set in the secrecy like the nestling of a bird, concealed, close, in Rock enclosed in the unending Rock (of Existence). Most Aṅgiras-like, the bolt-armed Indra strove to possess the Pen of Rays, the stall of cows as it were, he opened the doors, laid bare the impulses that lay hidden.

In other words, the amṛita of Bliss lies secreted within the physical being (the Rock, *vide* the *amṛitamānṭhana* episode) though it belongs to the supernal regions. This rock-like matter is itself housed within the infinite Rock which is Existence, with Ānanda lying at its very base. Through the process of the inner sacrifice, when the aspirant has risen above the physical and vital desire levels, and is established in the realm of pure mind, then this hidden Ānanda is spotted and partaken of by Indra, the presiding deity of Svar. Indra, then, resembles the purifying spiritual flame (Aṅgirasa) in his mission to recover the rays of divine knowledge (the herds of light) lying hidden in the layers of ignorance within the physical consciousness. Indra's weapon is the infallible *Vāk*, the divine Word which shatters all opposition of the powers of the Inconscient to reveal all the potentialities of the soul for growing into the divine life.

In Vyāsa, the fight between Indra and Garuḍa over amṛita seems to be an amplification of these concepts. Garuḍa, representing the soul, has overcome all opposition successfully and snatched the nectar of Bliss from the hidden place. Indra, the lord of Pure Mind, opposes him because the nectar is sought to be given away to the snakes, who are powers of darkness (that is why they reside in the depths of earth; see the *Uttaṅka* story in this connection). But Indra's weapon is unable to harm this divinely-strengthened soul (Viṣṇu's vehicle). Garuḍa, however, agrees that the amṛita should not be with the serpents, and lets Indra restore it to its proper place on the empyrean heights of being. The symbolising of Soma itself as the falcon, and Indra's close association with Soma, are both reflected in the alliance established between Indra and Garuḍa, and Garuḍa's bringing of nectar (he alone can do this because he is Soma, hence invincible, immortal, omnipotent). And he dwells in the highest heavens, like Soma, (figuring on Viṣṇu's flagstaff).¹⁴

Vyāsa, however, has not stopped with investing Garuḍa with Soma attributes. In śloka 6-8 of section 23 in the Āstika Parva Garuḍa is described in terms typical of Agni:

His radiance lit up the points of the universe; he was strong, able to change shape at will, empowered to travel anywhere, and he could summon whatever energy he wished. His was the terrible splendour of a mass of fire—a splendour like that of the flames at the end of a yuga.

His eyes flashed like lightning.

His body expanded on birth, and the colossal bird sped to the sky, fiercely screaming like a second ocean-fire.

In the Ṛigveda V.14.4. the birth and function of Agni are pithily stated:¹⁵

Fire at his birth has shone out slaying the destroyers, darkness by the light, he found the Ray-Cows, the Waters, the Sun-World.

Garuḍa, in his Agni-role, does precisely this* in vanquishing the serpents guarding the ambrosial waters (Soma), winging his way to the world of Svar and surpassing it to reach the supreme Sun-world of Truth (Viṣṇu) Actually, in V. 18.2. there is an explicit reference to Agni as one who “holds uninterruptedly the moon-wine¹⁶ (*i.e.*, Soma), paralleling Garuḍa’s carrying of amṛita.¹⁷

Garuḍa’s terrifying, world-filling roar is again Agni’s as in V. 25.8:¹⁸

Luminous are thy flaming radiances; there rises from thee a vast utterance like the voice of the pressing-stone of delight; yea, thy cry of itself rises up like a thunder-chant from the heavens.

The equation with “the pressing-stone of delight” likens Agni to Indra’s weapon *vajra*, which is the pressing-stone extracting Soma, in other words, this is the power of mantra or *Vāk* evoking the hidden germ of Bliss within the being.

When Garuḍa is invoked by the gods in ślokas 16-23, section 23 of the Āstika Parva, the Ṛigvedic echoes are no less. He is identified with Indra, Agni (also as “horse-necked”, *i.e.*, Agni in his horse manifestation), Vāyu, Viṣṇu, Sūrya, which recalls V.3.1-3 celebrating Agni as Varuṇa, Mitra, Indra, Aryaman, Rudra and Viṣṇu. In the Ṛigveda the eagle or falcon is frequently used as the symbol of Horse-Agni. In the very first maṇḍala, sukta 163 starts off with a celebration of Agni which might very well be the source of Vyāsa’s Uchchaiḥśravas:¹⁸

What time, first springing into life, thou neighedst, proceeding from the sea or upper waters, Limbs of the deer hadst thou, and eagle pinions, O Steed, thy birth is high and must be lauded.

The Vedic Agni, like the Purāṇic Uchchaiḥśravas, is born from the ocean and is

* Specially see sloka 19, “Master of purity/Lord of Wrath/Transcender of the dark senses” and sloka 23, “Dispeller of darkness, dispenser of grace ”

Indra's steed. The eagle-pinions of the horse symbolise its free upward flight from the dark earthly consciousness of its birth amid the waters of ignorance and inconscience, up to the Sun-world of Light, Truth and Bliss. In the sixth ṛik of this sukta we come across a direct figuring forth of Agni as the Bird which, like Garuḍa, flies up from earth to heaven eagerly searching for the divine food:¹⁸

Thyself from far I recognised in spirit, a Bird that from below flew through the heaven...

Here I beheld thy form, matchless in glory, eager to win thee food at the Cow's station.

In IV.38. we can find the source of the epithet *suparṇā* (beautiful-plumaged) applied to Garuḍa. Here, in the course of the invocation to Dadhikravan (Agni as the divine steed), we find¹⁹ ṛiks 2 and 5 in 19:

And ye gave mighty Dadhikras, the giver of many gifts, who visiteth all people, Impetuous hawk, swift and of varied colour, like a brave King whom each true man must honour....

Speeding to glory, as a herd of cattle, even as a hungry falcon swooping downward.

Garuḍa is not only the "hungry falcon" swooping down on the Niṣādas and the battling elephant and tortoise, but also "swift and of varied colour" (*suparṇā*). Just as here eagle-Agni-horse are identified, so in I.164.52 the image structure is Bird-Sun-Soma, with the beauty of the plumage reiterated²⁰:

The Bird Celestial, vast with noble pinion, the lovely germ of plants, the germ of waters.

Earlier on, X.123.5 has already been quoted²¹ where the same structure is repeated (Bird-Vena/Soma-golden-winged). In that connection, the significance of the golden wings was also brought out. Agni, it will be recalled, is also called "golden-tongued".

This Eagle-Agni image receives reinforcement from an unexpected quarter: the Kadru-Vinatā relationship. Dange, in an extremely valuable investigation into the probable meanings of these words, points out that *vinatā* means "bent", suggesting the curve of the heavens, which might be the basis for the *Taittirīya Samhitā* and *Suparṇādhyāya* identifications of *Suparṇi-Vinatā* with Dyauh (sky).²² *Kadru* means "tawny", suggesting the colour of the earth within which the serpents reside, resulting in the equation of *Kadru* with the earth in these texts. Barth (quoted by Dange) suggests that *Kadru* is "darkness" personified, as indeed it should if we remember the Vedic symbolic structure in which the earth represents the darkness of ignorance and inconscience.

Let us see how this fits into the R̥gvedic Agni symbol. The birth of this mighty god is frequently described as the result of the pressure of Heaven on Earth, who are the tinders, *araṇi*, which are rubbed, one on the other, for producing the sacrificial fire. The flaming will, *kratu*, of the godhead is the child of Mind and Body, Soul and material Nature, produced by a churning of the latter by the former.²³ Soaring up an eagle, “it rises through the vital or nervous mid-world and through our mental skies and enters at last the Paradise of Light, its own supreme home above where joyous for ever in the eternal Truth that is the foundation of the sempiternal Bliss the shining Immortals sit in their celestial sessions and drink the wine of the infinite beatitude.”²⁴ It is this which seems to be embodied in the Garuḍa myth and set forth very pithily in IX.71.9 of the R̥gveda:

Down to the earth hath looked the heavenly Falcon:
Soma with wisdom views all living creatures.

It is in this same sukta that we find the reference to Soma-falcon resting on the sacred grass in the sixth ṛik, already quoted. Does this offer any clue to the possibly symbolic incident of Garuḍa placing the Soma-vessel on the kuśa grass? This sacred grass is termed *barhiḥ* in the Veda which, as shown by Kapali Sastry,²⁵ is the symbol in the *yajña*-ritual for the seat prepared for the deity being invoked: “The seat for the Gods is indeed within, in the inner being (which)...must be kept pure and bright (*ghṛitapriṣṭha*)... Such a state of purity in the inner apartment glittering with the clarity of clear perception of the heart, is adorable and is the right condition for the Godhead (Agni) to reveal himself.” Applying this to the Garuḍa myth the symbol becomes quite clear: Agni, the psychic flame of aspiration, has successfully brought the nectar of Ānanda out from the clutches of the serpentine powers of darkness and placed it within the purified inner being of the *sādhaka*. From here Indra takes it up to heaven, *i.e.*, the germ of Bliss churned out from the nether depths of being rises up to the world of Pure Mind and beyond, leaving the powers of ignorance (the snakes) fruitlessly searching for the amṛita.

Another dimension is added to the symbolic import of the Eagle/Garuḍa image through the following ṛiks:²⁶

The sapient with their spirit and their mind behold the Bird adorned with all an Asura’s magic might.

Sages observe him in the ocean’s inmost depth: the wise disposers seek the station of his rays.

The flying Bird bears Speech within his spirit: erst the Gandharva in the womb pronounced it:

And at the seat of sacrifice the sages cherish this radiant heavenly-bright invention.

(X.177.1-2)

Besides the similarity in the sages worshipping Garuḍa's "magic might", it is the second ṛik's association of *Vāk* with the Bird Image which is of great significance. A further clue to the symbolism is found in II.43, the second, and last, of the suktas addressed to the mysterious bird Kapiñjala²⁷ which brings together the horse, *Vāk*/Gayatrī, priest and bird images to celebrate Agni or Indra:

Here on the right sing forth chanters of hymns of praise, even the winged birds that in due season speak.

He, like a Sama-chanter utters both the notes, skilled in the mode of Trishtubha and of Gayatri.

Thou like the chanter-priest chantest the Sama, Bird; thou singest at libations like a Brahman's son.

Even as a vigorous horse when he comes near the mare, announce to us good fortune, Bird, on every side, proclaim in all directions happy luck, O Bird.

(To be continued)

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

NOTES

¹³ *Mystic Approach to the Veda & the Upanishad*, p. 52.

¹⁴ Dange (op. cit., p. 167-8) refers to a passage in the *Kathaka Samhitā*.¹⁴ which is extremely significant: during the devasura war the danava Susna carries away amrita in his mouth and revives the slain asuras thereby. Noticing this, Indra turns into a lump of honey which Susna swallows, whereupon Indra transfers himself into Syena, the falcon, and flies out snatching amrita from the danava's mouth. The passage adds that whomsoever is desired to live free from disease, such a one should be breathed out after having been swallowed, for he is exhaled with amrita. It will be noticed that here Indra assumes Garuḍa's role in wresting nectar from the guardian serpents/Susna who originally possesses it. Further, this egress in falcon form through the mouth with amrita is analogous to the Eagle-Gayatri-mantra-Vak identification discussed later. There is more than a hint of the resurrecting powers of the mantra which Vyasa makes the theme of his Kacha-Sanjivani story.

¹⁵ Sri Aurobindo. *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, op. cit, p. 226

¹⁶ *ibid.* p. 238.

¹⁷ X 45.12 91.14 (MF 402, 424)

¹⁸ Griffith, op cit p. 108.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 226.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 114.

²¹ pp. 4 & 5 ante.

²² Dange, op. cit. p. 138ff.

²³ *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 360.

²⁴ Griffith, p. 500 and see X.1.1-3 vide *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* op cit p. 379:—"High and vast the Fire stood in front of the dawns; issuing out of the darkness he with the Light: Fire, a perfect body of brilliant lustre, filled out at his very birth all the worlds.

Through art the child born from earth and heaven, the child beautiful carried in the growths of earth .

Vishnu knowing rightly the supreme plane of this Fire, born in his vastness, guards the third (plane)..."

²⁵ *Further Lights on the Veda*, op. cit., pp. 94, 95

²⁶ Griffith, p. 648

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 158.

THE TWO DISEASES

A FOLKTALE FROM PONDICHERRY

EARLY in the morning the washerman as usual woke up his wife to start for the river to wash the bundled-up dirty clothes. They tied the big bundle to the back of their old and haggard ass and accompanied it to the river.

On reaching the river-bank, the washerman unburdened the ass and asked his wife to unbundle the clothes. She untied the knots and took out the pieces one after another. "What is this?" she asked her husband, pointing to a small bundle lying amidst the clothes.

The washerman looked at it and told his wife, "Take that small bundle to the other side of the bank and wash it clean. Dry up the pieces in a separate place and bundle them again. On no account should the clothes from that small bundle mix up with those of the bigger one."

The washerwoman nodded her head in approval and crossed the shallow and narrow river to reach the other side. Opening the small bundle she found two dhotis, one jibba and one towel. Out of them one dhoti and the jibba were made of costly linen. The other dhoti and the towel, both patched up here and there, were of cheap cotton. These clothes were not as dirty as the others in the bigger bundle. Yet they were segregated because the clothes had been worn by two bed-ridden patients in that village.

The linen clothes obviously belonged to a rich man and the patched ones were a poor farmer's. But both lots had been touched by infectious diseases and so they had to be washed clean and dried by themselves.

The washerwoman soaked the clothes in the running river and thrashed them one by one on a flat stone-slab lying on the bank. As they were not very dirty, it took very little time for her to wash them clean. She then squeezed the water out and spread the clothes on the bank to dry in the sun.

The spirit of the disease that had so far been living in the poor man's clothes came slowly out of them and tried to slip away unnoticed. At that time it heard a voice from behind: "Where are you going, brother?" It was the voice of the spirit of the disease living in the rich man's clothes.

"I am bidding good-bye to the poor fellow. He is feeding me with nothing. Most of the days he abstains from eating. And if at all he gives me food, he gives me that tasteless porridge. Now and then I am tortured with the bitter juice extracted from green herbs. So I don't like to be with the poor man. I hate that fellow and so I am leaving him. And what about you?"

"Oh! Why should I go? I am happy to my heart's content. I'll never leave the rich man till I am fed up with his hospitality. I sleep merrily on a cushioned bed and I am looked after with great care by his relatives and servants. I am served with orange juice and fruits of different shapes. Sweet-scented and tasty pills I swallow.

Now and then I am given nourishing diet with many sorts of vitamins. And I enjoy life to the lees. Why should I go with you? No! Not until I find a richer man.”

The poor man's disease wept over its ill luck and went in search of a rich man, who could look after it.

That is why the poor get rid of any disease very quickly and the rich suffer for a long time.

P. RAJA

THE LORD OF HORSES

A NOVELLA

(Continued from the issue of July 1981)

7

I HAD saved the tarpans from the Kalmuk's cruelty. But now I realised that the tarpans themselves were cruel too.

Winter came. And for the tarpans it was cruelty-time.

Snow fell in the valley as Boubinoff had described to me. In the woods trees stretched their snow-coated branches up to the sky. In the valley the grass had died stifled by snow. And so the tarpans left the valley in search of food. But what they found on the way was meagre.

They looked inside caves and they looked in the hollows of mountains and they found a kind of lichen which was nauseating. And in the valleys where snow had not yet come down they found a grass that had already gone musty. There were small thorny bushes that pricked the mouth and the tongue. Sometimes the tarpans grazed only snow. And this made them sad and angry.

Like them I ate snow. I followed them in their wintry expeditions. The steppe and the mountains were both covered with snow. And all this whiteness brought back to me the memory of the Great Desert, specially when the cold sun coloured the whiteness with a dash of rose.

And I remembered Ourida-the-Rose, my friend and my nurse. And I told Boubinoff about her. I recounted to him her lessons full of wisdom. And Boubinoff was all ears. And he asked me more questions and kept saying:

"And then? And then, Saïd? Go on. Tell me more."

And I told him about Gezela the gazelle, and Soyola the jerboa of the Great Desert, and Farhaj the messenger-eagle of the Sages of the Great Desert. Boubinoff listened. And he no longer thought about the sunken belly.

The other tarpans saw us talk. And some of them were jealous. But there were others, on the contrary, who appreciated our cheerfulness. And they came around us, around Boubinoff and me.

Among these tarpans of good will were the five I had freed from the Kalmuks by unseating their riders. These horses asked me about the Great Desert. I told them. Then it was my turn to ask them about the Kalmuks. They answered. And their stories were full of instruction.

According to them, the Kalmuks did not only hunt tarpans. The Kalmuks were also shepherds. And their flocks of sheep were happy, they were well looked after and well fed. And the Kalmuks' wives were kind to the horses. In spring they gathered rare grasses for them. And that reminded me of Meryem, Mohammed-

bin-Moktar's wife, who would go at dawn with a basket on her head to pick rare grasses for me. And I thought of Meryem putting the basket in front of me and telling me:

"Feast yourself, Saïd. These grasses will quicken your blood and purify your bowels."

And I told myself that if the Kalmuks' wives were so good, so caring, capable of collecting rare grasses for their husbands' horses, then certainly some happiness must be there in the Kalmuk camps.

And the tarpans who had belonged to the Kalmuks taught me that the tents of their old masters were called yourts and that they were made with felt. And that felt was made out of camel's hair.

"So the Kalmuks keep camels too"? I enquired.

"Yes, the Kalmuks keep camels too," replied the freed tarpans.

"Then why do they hunt tarpans? Why do they capture and domesticate free tarpans?"

"Because they love them."

I was stunned. But the freed tarpans confessed to me that the Kalmuks rode their horses without malice. They never tugged at their horses' mouths, they wore no rowels on their spurs and preferred to forgo food themselves rather than deprive their horses.

"So then why do they make cheese with their mares' milk—instead of leaving the milk to the foals and fillies?" I asked.

"They make this cheese once a year only. And that too when the little ones are weaned away from their mother's milk. This is an occasion for a festival called the 'festival of the friendly horse'."

And they explained to me that the favourite word of the Kalmuks was Niak and that Niak wasn't a war-cry, as I believed; no, Niak meant comrade. It is for this that the Kalmuks, while they hunt the tarpans, cry Niak Niak Niak: comrade, comrade, comrade.

"But explain to me then, why are you so happy to be freed from these masters who look upon you as comrades?"

In one voice the freed tarpans replied:

"For us, tarpans, nothing is dearer than freedom. Absolutely nothing."

And they repeated it over and over again. Then they moved away and started to gallop. It was a gallop of happiness, it was a gallop of freedom.

But I remained pensive. And I told Boubinoff that he had misinformed me about the Kalmuks. And that when the Kalmuks returned home and took off their ugly hoods that made their heads look like the heads of birds of prey and when they took off their boots and their pelisses, the Kalmuks must resemble, despite their saffron-coloured skin, the warriors of Mohammed-bin-Moktar when they took off their burnouses.

And I told him that their little boys must play with their horses as Mehhi had

played with me.

And I told him that in the camps where there were camels and where horses were called comrades, in camps such as these there must surely be joy and cheer.

But with a stubborn forehead Boubinoff replied: "One who strips a horse of his liberty is not a friend. The horse's one and unique joy is to be free."

I kept quiet and thought about what Boubinoff had told me and as I thought I started to gallop on the snows of the mountain. But I could not abandon myself completely to the joy of this gallop.

One evening, Mitia Kuzmitch assembled all of us around him by neighing three times.

"Winter is particularly rude this year," he told us. "We have all become skinny. And my wife and other mares have gone acutely anaemic."

I looked at Mitia's wife. In truth she had lost a lot of flesh and one could count her ribs.

"Less than three versts from here," continued Mitia Kuzmitch, "there is a Kalmuk camp. And this camp is very rich. Its inhabitants have a lot of riches, huge reserves of grain and of grass under their yourts. Let us go and eat up those reserves. For they belong as well to us as to them. To possess for oneself alone is unjust and immoral. All should belong to all if we want to be free and not belong to anyone."

From Mitia Kuzmitch's audience came shouts of approval. And the more excited ones repeated Mitia Kuzmitch's words like a lesson they had memorised.

"We will sneak into this camp, sneak under their yourts. And we will go and eat up those reserves of grain and grass. Hail Mitia Kuzmitch. Hail. Hail."

I was astounded. Mitia Kuzmitch, the democratic doyen of the tarpans, was preaching plunder. And willingly the free tarpans consented. They prepared themselves to eat the grain and the grass of people whom they refused to befriend.

"What a shame!" I said aloud.

Mitia Kuzmitch's thunder fell once again on me.

"If you don't agree with us, grey horse, you can go back from where you came. Go back to the Great Desert and to the two comrades who were so foolish as to send you to us."

"I cannot, Mitia Kuzmitch. Because I am one of you now. And I cannot disown you."

"Those who find fault with the constitution of the tarpans have no place here. Franc-tireurs and knight-errants like you are sent to the Desolate Tundra. I warn you, therefore, grey horse, that if you criticise the tarpans, they will deport you to the Desolate Tundra.

I looked at Mitia Kuzmitch with consternation. And then for the first time in his life perhaps, Boubinoff picked up courage to answer back his leader:

"And if the Kalmuks surprise us?" he asked.

Another rumour ran through the assembly: "Down with Boubinoff. Hail Mi-

tia Kuzmitch. Down with Boubinoff. Hail Mitia Kuzmitch.”

And Mitia Kuzmitch silenced them all. Then he explained that the raid would take place early in the morning, after the men had left, when only the women, the children and the foals remained in the camp. He assured them that there was no danger.

And the leader added that the tarpans were free. Free to eat or not eat. Free to browse snow or eat the Kalmuks' grain.

Silence.

And I too remained silent like the others. But my heart was full of bitterness. At dawn, Mitia Kuzmitch gathered his people, his comrade-plunderers. And he led them towards the Kalmuk camp.

From afar I witnessed the scene. Beside me stood Boubinoff. And he too was a witness. And the tarpans whom the Kalmuks had captured and domesticated and whom I had liberated, they too stood beside us.

Behind Mitia Kuzmitch the famished horses crept into the two tents that served as grain-stores.

For some time no one in the camp thought to disturb them. Then all of a sudden cries were heard. Cries of children and of women. The Kalmuk camp was gripped by fear and fell into disorder. I saw the women run. I saw the children run too. I saw the camels, the sheep and the goats run. And I saw an old man dressed in a great fur coat and wearing a fur hat lash a whip and brandish a sabre. The old man pierced the felt of the yurt with his sabre, the yurt where the tarpans were gorging themselves. I could not hear but I saw his whip lash, I saw it lash again and again. And I saw the little ones wail. And the women cry.

Then I saw the tarpans come back very contented and gay. They seemed almost drunk. And Mitia Kuzmitch seemed drunk too. He halted in front of me and stupidly started neighing.

I turned my head away, sick with shame and disgust.

That night I escaped.

I did not know where to go. I did not even know where we were. But I could no longer stay with the tarpans. I wanted to return to the Great Desert. I wanted to flee the company of horses as I had fled the company of men. Just then as I thought about the Great Desert and the two Sages I had met there, I remembered that they had spoken to me of another race of free horses who lived on the other side of the world: the mustangs of Nevada. I did not yet know whether I wanted to go to Nevada nor how I would be able to reach it. I just knew one way: the way I had come to the country of the tarpans. And so, undecided and all alone, I resolved that night to retrace my steps back along the way I had come.

(To be continued)

CHRISTINE & ARCHAKA

(Translated by Maurice from the original French)