

MOTHER INDIA

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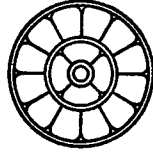
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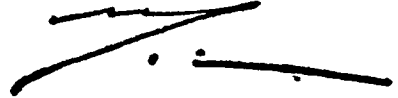


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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THE PSYCHIC ENTITY AND THE PSYCHIC BEING

LIGHTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

The Soul in Nature

At the beginning the soul in Nature, the psychic entity, whose unfolding is the first step towards a spiritual change, is an entirely veiled part of us, although it is that by which we exist and persist as individual beings in Nature. The other parts of our natural composition are not only mutable but perishable; but the psychic entity in us persists and is fundamentally the same always: it contains all essential possibilities of our manifestation but is not constituted by them; it is not limited by what it manifests, not contained by the incomplete forms of the manifestation, not tarnished by the imperfections and impurities, the defects and deprivations of the surface being. It is an ever-pure flame of the divinity in things and nothing that comes to it, nothing that enters into our experience can pollute its purity or extinguish the flame. This spiritual stuff is immaculate and luminous and, because it is perfectly luminous, it is immediately, intimately, directly aware of truth of being and truth of nature; it is deeply conscious of truth and good and beauty because truth and good and beauty are akin to its own native character, forms of something that is inherent in its own substance. It is aware also of all that contradicts these things, of all that deviates from its own native character, of falsehood and evil and the ugly and the unseemly; but it does not become these things nor is it touched or changed by these opposites of itself which so powerfully affect its outer instrumentation of mind, life and body. For the soul, the permanent being in us, puts forth and uses mind, life and body as its instruments, undergoes the envelopment of their conditions, but it is other and greater than its members.

If the psychic entity had been from the beginning unveiled and known to its ministers, not a secluded King in a screened chamber, the human evolution would have been a rapid soul-outflowing, not the difficult, chequered and disfigured development it now is; but the veil is thick and we know not the secret Light within us, the light in the hidden crypt of the heart's innermost sanctuary. Intimations rise to our surface from the psyche, but our mind does not detect their source; it takes them for its own activities because, before even they come to the surface, they are clothed in mental substance; thus ignorant of their authority, it follows or does not follow them according to its bent or turn at the moment. If the mind obeys the urge of the vital ego, then there is little chance of the psyche at all controlling the nature or manifesting in us something of its secret spiritual stuff and native movement; or, if the mind is over-confident to act in its own smaller light, attached to its own judgement, will and action of knowledge, then also the soul will remain veiled and quiescent and wait for the mind's farther evolution. For the psychic part within is there to support the natural evolution, and the first natural evolution must be the development of body,

life and mind, successively, and these must act each in its own kind or together in their ill-assorted partnership in order to grow and have experience and evolve. The soul gathers the essence of all our mental, vital and bodily experience and assimilates it for the farther evolution of our existence in Nature; but this action is occult and not obtruded on the surface. In the early material and vital stages of the evolution of being there is indeed no consciousness of soul; there are psychic activities, but the instrumentation, the form of these activities are vital and physical,—or mental when the mind is active. For even the mind, so long as it is primitive or is developed but still too external, does not recognise their deeper character. It is easy to regard ourselves as physical beings or beings of life or mental beings using life and body and to ignore the existence of the soul altogether; for the only definite idea that we have of the soul is of something that survives the death of our bodies; but what this is we do not know because even if we are conscious sometimes of its presence, we are not normally conscious of its distinct reality nor do we feel clearly its direct action in our nature.

As the evolution proceeds, Nature begins slowly and tentatively to manifest our occult parts; she leads us to look more and more within ourselves or sets out to initiate more clearly recognisable intimations and formations of them on the surface. The soul in us, the psychic principle has already begun to take secret form; it puts forward and develops a soul-personality, a distinct psychic being to represent it. This psychic being remains still behind the veil in our subliminal part, like the true mental, the true vital or the true or subtle physical being within us; but, like them, it acts on the surface life by the influences and intimations it throws up upon that surface; these form part of the surface aggregate which is the conglomerate effect of the inner influences and upsurgings, the visible formation and superstructure which we ordinarily experience and think of as ourselves. On this ignorant surface we become dimly aware of something that can be called a soul as distinct from mind, life or body; we feel it not only as our mental idea or vague instinct of ourselves, but as a sensible influence in our life and character and action. A certain sensitive feeling for all that is true and good and beautiful, fine and pure and noble, a response to it, a demand for it, a pressure on mind and life to accept and formulate it in our thought, feelings, conduct, character is the most usually recognised, the most general and characteristic, though not the sole sign of this influence of the psyche. Of the man who has not this element in him or does not respond at all to this urge, we say that he has no soul. For it is this influence that we can most easily recognise as a finer or even a diviner part in us and the most powerful for the slow turning towards some aim at perfection in our nature.

Soul, Purusha, Jivatman

Again what do you mean by a soul? My proposition simply meant that there is no existence which has not the support of something of the Divine behind it. But the word soul has various meanings according to the context; it may mean the Purusha supporting the formation of Prakriti, which we call a being, though the proper word would be rather a becoming; it may mean, on the other hand, specifically the psychic being in an evolutionary creature like man; it may mean the spark of the Divine which has been put into Matter by the descent of the Divine into the material world and which upholds all evolving formations here. There is and can be no psychic being, in a non-evolutionary creature like the Asura; there can be none in a god who does not need one for his existence. But what the god has is a Purusha and a Prakriti or Energy of nature of that Purusha. If any being of the typical worlds wants to evolve, he has to come down to earth and take a human body and accept to share in the evolution. It is because they do not want to do this that the vital beings try to possess men so that they may enjoy the materialities of physical life without having the burden of the evolution or the process of conversion in which it culminates. I hope this is clear and solves the difficulty.

Sri Aurobindo, S.A.B.C.E. Vol. 22, p 386

The three stages you speak of are stages not of evolution but of the involution of the Divine in Matter. The Devas and Asuras are not evolved in Matter; for the typical being only a Purusha with its Prakriti is necessary—this Purusha may put out a mental and vital Purusha to represent it and according as it is centred in one or another it belongs to the mental or vital world. That is all.

There is no essential difference anywhere, for all is fundamentally the essential Divine, the difference is in the manifestation. Practically we may say that the Jivatman is one of the Divine Many and dependent on the One; the Atman is the One supporting the Many. The psychic being does not merge in the Jivatman, it becomes united with it so that there is no difference between it and the eternal being supporting the manifestation from within it, because the psychic being has become fully aware of the play of the Divine through it. What is called merging takes place in the Divine Consciousness when the Jivatman feels itself so one with the Divine that there is nothing else.

Sri Aurobindo, S.A.B.C.E. Vol. 22, pages 386-387

The Psychic and Transformation

It is not the psychic but the mind that gets raised and transformed and its action intensified by the intuitivising of the consciousness. The psychic is always the same in essence and adapts its action without need of transformation to any change of consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo, S.A.B C E Vol. 24, p 1158

The Psychic Presence and the Psychic Being

With regard to the evolution upwards, it is more correct to speak of the psychic presence than the psychic being. For it is the psychic presence which little by little becomes the psychic being. In each evolving form there is this presence, but it is not individualised. It is something which is capable of growth and follows the movement of the evolution. It is not a descent of the involution from above. It is formed progressively round the spark of Divine Consciousness which is meant to be the centre of a growing being which becomes the psychic being when it is at last individualised. It is this spark that is permanent and gathers round itself all sorts of elements for the formation of that individuality; the true psychic being is formed only when the psychic personality is fully grown, fully built up, round the eternal divine spark; it attains its culmination, its total fulfilment if and when it unites with a being or personality from above.

Below the human level there is, ordinarily, hardly any individual formation—there is only this presence, more or less. But when, by the growth of the body round the spark of Divine Consciousness, humanity began upon the earth, certain human organisms became in the course of this progressive growth sufficiently perfected, and by their opening and receptivity allowed a junction with certain beings descending from above. This gave rise to a kind of divine humanity, what may be called a race of the elite. If only they had remained by themselves, these people would have continued as a race unique and superhuman. Indeed many races have made claims to be that: the Aryan, the Semitic and the Japanese have all in turn considered themselves the chosen race. But in fact there has been a general levelling of humanity, a lot of intermixture. For there arose the necessity of prolongation of the superior race, which drove it to intermix with the rest of humanity—with animal humanity, that is to say. Thus its value was degraded and led to that great Fall which is spoken of in the world's scriptures, the coming out of Paradise, the end of the Golden Age. Indeed it was a loss from the point of view of consciousness, but not from that of material strength, since it was a tremendous gain to ordinary humanity. There were, certainly, some beings who had a very strong will not to mix, who resented losing their superiority; and it is just this that is the real origin of race-pride, race-exclusiveness and special caste-distinction like that cherished by the Brahmins in India. But at present it cannot be said that there is any portion of mankind which is purely animal;

all the races have been touched by the descent from above, and owing to the extensive intermixture the result of the Involution was more widely spread.¹

Of course one cannot say that every man has got a psychic being, just as one cannot refuse to grant it to every animal. Many animals that have lived near man have some beginnings of it, while so often one comes across people who do not seem to be anything else than brutes. Here, too, there has been a good deal of levelling. But on the whole, the psychic in the true sense starts at the human stage; that is also why the Catholic religion declares that only man has a soul. In man alone there is the possibility of the psychic being growing to its full stature even so far as to be able in the end to join and unite with a descending being, a godhead from above.

Collected Works of the Mother . Volume 3, pages 150-151

¹ Editor's Note. The word "Involution" is used here in the sense of "Descent" — a movement from a higher plane, complementary to "Evolution", which is an "Ascent", a movement from a lower one.

A VISIT TO HIS ROOM

GOLDEN incense round Thy domain, O King of Kings!
 Room of glorious shadows and light,
 Gaze inseparable from the heaven of Thy Feet!
 Space like unending day-glow—never darkness of night.
 In a silver pool roses opening, likewise our hearts
 To that celestial tranquillity pervading the air.
 Our bodies in homage heavy with a trancelike fervour—
 Grace descending into our inner being laid bare.

MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA

NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

THE COMPLETE SET

(Continued from the issue of May 1982)

December 28, 1935

While crushing my rigid mind, do you want to establish the long-neglected and much-maligned merits of homeopathy as beyond all dispute and harangue by allopaths?

Not at all. I don't care a penny for homeopathy (or allopathy). I only wanted to poke some jokes at your allopathic mind.

My attack is against two things: R's efficiency and capacity as a doctor; and the rationale of homeopathy in symptomatology alone.

If you question that, you destroy homeopathy altogether.

I asked R about the patient G: "Is there no thickening of the blood vessels, high blood pressure, no dyspnoea etc.?" He said, "None at all." Yet Dr. Prasad Rao found all these and signs of heart failure.

You went when G had a setback. R had written to me about headache, liver and some other difficulties before you went.

Dr. Rao further said that the patient was still in the danger zone. Any exertion, indiscretion might bring about another attack.

But it seems Valle has different ideas; he does not find G in a dangerous state or on the point of death, as he was before. Admitting Prasad Rao's infallibility, is Valle then a fool? Why does he give credit to R or keep him there? If R is such an incompetent ass, why does V support him, cover him, keep him there? This is a thing which seems to me unintelligible. Doctors differ? Why so much in this case? Valle who does not believe in Divine Force, is, I think, the only doctor here who has a practical knowledge of homeopathy—he was struck with the justice of R's treatment from the first in S's case; he approves of his treatment in G's. Would he do so if R were merely a blundering ignoramus?

R gives a high blood-pressure patient on the verge of heart-failure "moderate" licence in eating, drinking etc. He calls it "leaving to Nature!"

Well, I have followed that system with myself and others and go on the basis that Nature is very largely what you make of her or can make of her.

Since his heart, kidney cannot be regenerated, his habits have therefore to be adjusted accordingly. He can't remain a 'bon vivant' any more.

In that case isn't it better that G should die? What's the use of life under such conditions?

If R is concerned only with symptoms, why does he ask me to find out the significance of high blood-pressure etc. or ask Valle to build up a diet for G?

Because he found you very competent at it. As for the diet he had to cede something to Valle so that the family might see there was a necessary collaboration.

People will acclaim that allopathy has failed and homeopathy has succeeded. But my point is that Valle, an allopath, would have been as successful as R if he had the backing of your Force.

The Force needs an instrument and an instrumentation also sometimes. The instrument was R, the instrumentation partly at least his drugs. I don't believe in the story of the inefficiency of homeopathic drugs only because they are homeopathic. Also, I don't believe that R knows nothing about them and can't properly apply them. I have noted almost constantly that they have a surprising effect, sometimes instantaneous, sometimes rapid, and this not in R's evidence alone, but in the statement of his patients and the visible results. Not being an allopathic doctor, I can't ignore a fact like that.

I quote to you an instance of the symptomatic riddle. Some symptoms like headache, vomiting etc. may be caused by many diseases such as brain-tumour, syphilis, blood-pressure and others. If you tell me that a homeopathic medicine for headache and other symptoms will be a panacea for all of them then I am afraid it will be difficult for me to accept it.

Tumour, syphilis etc. are specialities, but what I have found in my psycho-physical experience is that most disorders of the body are connected, though they go by families,—but there is also connection between the families. If one can strike at their psycho-physical root, one can cure even without knowing the pathological whole of the matter and working through the symptoms as a possibility. Some medicines invented by demi-mystics have this power. What I am now considering is whether homeopathy has any psycho-physical basis. Was the founder a demi-mystic? I don't understand otherwise certain peculiarities of the way in which R's medicines act.

Now the diagnosis, about which you have joked. Why take a muddle as an instance and ignore other cases? I should say that a mistaken diagnosis of the appendix, for example, is very rare.

Good heavens! It happened in scores and scores of cases when there was the appendicitis mania among doctors in France—and they have other manias also.

Why ignore wonderful things due to thousands of right diagnoses and let sporadic cases of error loom large in your eyes?

Sporadic cases! I have heard of any number of them; they are as plentiful as blackberries in Europe. And as for the difference of diagnosis it is almost the rule except when doctors consult together and give concessions to each other. Don't try to throw allopathic dust in my eyes, sir! I have lived a fairly long time and seen something of the world before my retirement and much more after it.

We know only a few big cases of success of R, but how many of his failures do we know? In the Ashram itself Rajangam is one. I saw R's most furious letter to you on Rajangam's lack of faith.

But I have Rajangam's letters also. He seems to have had a curious mixture of superstitious hope and strong doubt, especially as R bungled badly at one point. However the body of an allopathic doctor can't be expected to respond to a homeopathic fellow, can it?

Then I hear he has failed in L's case also.

If L's case failed, then L in her letters lied to me. She related a complete cure of all that she had been suffering from for dreary months and years in which she was writing blood-curdling letters to me relating all her symptoms and miseries in voluminous detail. Once feeling well, she declared she did not believe in treatment but in Divine Force only, gave R a kick and sent him away. He was of course furious. For sometime I had no letters, then little by little they began again, but as yet they are not so blood-curdling as before. Question: If D.F.¹ does it without drugs, why is not L cured now as she was then under R?

I don't know of the other miraculous cures nor do I know what rational grounds he has put forward for S's taking Ashram food.

Rational, from the point of view of his experience only—not from allopathic pathology.

¹ Nirodbaran's note. Divine Force.

I think an allopath like M would be able to cure many people just as R has done—and also without some of R's mistakes.

M has an admirable knowledge and masterful movement in his treatments, but Mother finds that he is an overdruggier. He pours drugs on his patients as some painters overload their canvas with colour. He almost killed himself in this way and we had all the trouble in the world to tone him down. He admitted it frankly, but since professional bias was too strong for him, when he fell ill, he could not help drugging and drugging.

That brings me to K's case which we diagnosed from blood vomit etc. as T.B., R brought up the verdict: "Vicarious Menstruation"! Well, blood-vomit he may stop, with the Divine Force acting through him and his drugs—but what about the T.B. itself?

K's case may be T.B., though Valle dragged in a "vraisemblablement" and X-Ray is required—very probably it is, though I am not quite sure. R swears that ordinary doctors who have not had sufficient gynaecological experience can and do take V.M. for T.B. It does not follow that it is so in this case and his statement may be all bluff ... Now if we look beyond pathology to what I may call psycho-pathology (non-allopathic, non-homeopathic), this hysteria is usually accompanied with some disorder of the genital parts; wrong menstruation is itself often due to sexual trouble. T.B. again is always (psychologically) due to a psychic depression—I use psychic in the ordinary, not the Yogic sense; this psychic depression may arise from sex frustration of one kind or another or from some reaction of the sexual order. So if R is wrong in suspecting V.M., psychologically he may be right—there may be, not vicarious menstruation, but its psychological equivalent. All that may no doubt be Greek (not medical Greek) to you, but I know what I mean—and so long as that is there, the cure of the T.B. by D.F. is rather problematical. In X's case I saw at once that nothing could be done. That is why R got his chance. The allopaths could have cured the T.B., but it would have come back worse than before. However he is so disgusted with all the storm of opposition raised against him that he seems inclined to throw up the cases and even (other things aiding) to leave the Ashram. If so, all will be peace in Jerusalem, S will go back with his liver into orthodox hands, G fulfil his allopathic destiny and an interesting phase will be over.

R, a pure homeopath, has no knowledge of the pathology of diseases. Hence his treatment will be less effective than that of an allopathic homeopath. Who will succeed more?

But the allopaths can? Then how the devil do non-allopathic homeopaths (R is not the only example) succeed at all in their pathological cases? They do, you know, and that needs some explaining.

Actually, apart from anti-allopathic jokes and speculations, I don't say anything. I am not in the habit of jumping at conclusions when there are many possibles without a complete certitude, but wait till knowledge comes. I do not believe that D.F. has done everything in all these cases and they would have been ameliorated equally well if anybody else had been there. I count R for a remarkable though too resonant instrument.¹ I see there is something in his treatment and medical ideas which is out of the ordinary and cannot be gauged by traditional standards. I am trying to see what it is. Is it that he has an intuition into psycho-physical forces and throws his drugs at them in a successful way, partly intuitional, partly experimental, while his physical renderings of them (attempts at diagnoses) are mere façade or error—except when they happen to be right? It may be, but that sounds too easy and plausible an explanation to be true.

December 29, 1935

About my Bengali poem—I wrote the lines marked and then the Muse failed. NK saw them, picked up and completed the poem. Naturally he has expressed his own sentiments. They are not mine, neither did I know what they would be when I started. I intend some day to write one myself with those lines as they seem quite good. What's your opinion?

Your lines are very good. N's poem is very fine; but his style is too strong to agree with yours. It is as if a trumpet were to take up the notes of a flute.

By the way, J all on a sudden told me, before B, about the correspondence regarding the supramental descent on some anonymous sadhak and your remarks—exaggerated ego etc.; I hope J didn't mean B and myself, because very often we cut many jokes about your Supermind.

Not yourself. He quoted some silly remarks of X about Mother being Jivatman and myself Paramatman and his own *ātmajñān* and of Y having the Supermind descending up to his chest etc. I keep back the names. I said if anybody made such a claim it was only exaggerated ego.

R has left some reports of blood-urine analysis for you to see. Yesterday R took me again to the patient and I found he looked much better. His blood-urea has come down to normal. Something! How? Don't know!

¹ Nirodbaran's reference:

20-3-37

Have you asked R's opinion on this matter?

Haven't asked him. Afraid of a resonant explanation which would leave me gobbrified and flabbergasted but no wiser than before.

Of course not. The Py¹ doctors say it is magic and contrary to science; others refuse to believe it unless they see the analysis. A little too much noise about the matter.

December 30, 1935

You are silent on B.P.'s New Year pranam! In a fix?

Forgot all about it. He can come.

I have made quite a rigorous programme to start from the New Year: English metre with Arjava—he is willing to teach, and French with Sarala, provided Mother finds no objection. So?

No objection at all. Enthusiastic approval!

May I ask you for that promised poem as a New Year present?

You may ask; but who has time for it? Not yours truly.

My friend J, whose photo I sent you the other day, expresses a desire to come here.

No recollection of it at all! But the Mother remembers and she has given me a glimmering and gleaming reflection of a recollection. Yes it was the photograph in which you qualified for Abyssinia. Right.

Is permission for Darshan possible though he hasn't asked for it, because I suppose he doesn't know about it?

It's the only thing possible for a beginning.

P is complaining of shooting headache due to her eyes etc. Can't you do something to make the shoots and her also quiet? She says, "What can poor Nirod do? He is trying all he can." Poor Nirod, what?

(To be continued)

¹ Nirodbaran's note: Py=Pondicherry.

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

(Continued from the issue of May 1982)

MYSELF: Dear Mother, I find that towards the evening an aspiration from within rises upwards with a good deal of intensity, but at noon there is nothing of that kind. At times a sense of emptiness and boredom comes over me and I feel lonely. It can be driven away, but that intensity does not come back. A condition of being neither here nor there is very painful. It is almost suffocating to remain in this middle zone.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is best to take these movements as a means first of knowing what part of the being is still unchanged or imperfectly changed and then of bringing into it the true condition. As here it is evidently the physical vital consciousness that has still not lost the social instinct and the need of social pleasure. Don't get discouraged when these things come, but react with a quiet confidence that this must change and will change. 2.4.33

MYSELF: Mother mine, I feel so ashamed to speak to you of all these utterly futile talks. Please correct the impure motive that may be lurking behind them. Whatever be the true motive that may not be detected by me, it will be clear to you and my purpose will be served. I feel at ease after unburdening myself to you. What would be the best thing to do?

SRI AUROBINDO: To confess or speak to the Mother what you knew was always right and could have only a good effect—but not to yield to jealousy and other passions and the conduct that came from it. If anything good came out of that, it was because the Divine Will overruled all for a good result, otherwise there could have been disastrous consequences. 4.4.33

MYSELF: Mother, today, I sang for an hour, expressing my ardent prayer to you and, on getting up, I at once wrote this letter. I lost myself entirely in you. That feeling is still throbbing inside. It was as if my whole being had fallen at your feet and been making this prayer intensely. I shall simply send this song of Rabindranath with slight changes made by me and offer my humble prayer through the song:

O Mother, do accept me now,
Don't turn me back again,
Possess my rebel heart,
With me remain!
The days that have gone by
I call no longer nigh,
Let them fall to dust.

"To keep open to thy Light"
 Should be my life's refrain.
 What lures, what voices
 Made me roam here and there
 In the wild waste!
 Now with thy face close to my breast
 Let me catch thy wondrous strain.
 All darkness and deception
 Still hide in my secret heart,
 O Mother, burn in thy pure fire—
 Turn me not back again!

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, that is the way. The intensity of the aspiration brings the intensity of the experience and by repeated intensity of the experience the change.

5.4.33

MYSELF: Mother, I am aspiring for that condition, that Ananda which, once obtained even for a short while, makes one realise what it is to live with impatience and dryness.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is sure to come back—let there be such a foundation that it can remain.

7.4.33

MYSELF: Mother, I want so much that my attachment should go, but alas, I don't see any effect. I feel very depressed. How shall I be free from the bondage? It seems I am just where I was. What then is the way?

SRI AUROBINDO: You should not indulge this sense of grief—remain calm, confident, turned to the one Will in all circumstances, that is the way to be secure that each step will be taken in the right measure and produce its best possible consequences. Regard henceforth the question of Y and your relation as a minor and subordinate thing on the other side of your sadhana. If you take it as a problem of the first importance it will become that and stand in your way again, look at it as a question from the past that has been firmly settled and put in its place and turn to the central aim of your sadhana.

For the rest, apart from this, circumstances need change nothing in the inward aim and concentrate your will and endeavour on the one thing to be done—the entire self-giving and self-dedication of your inner and outer being to the Divine alone. If you can adopt firmly the right inward attitude, it may even be easier so than by a strong compression on your outer movements with the wall of an outward rule for your main protection.

18.4.33

MYSELF: Mother, have I still to write about this coming and going? I thought it would be better not to do it, for writing about it would mean remembering. So long

as there is no difficulty, I should not refer to it. But I leave the decision to you.

SRI AUROBINDO: I think you are right. It is no use any longer thinking always about him. Only when you need to write or that there is anything we ought to know as regards yourself in that connection—a marked progress or any serious difficulty.

12.4.33

MYSELF: Dear Mother, last night at about 10 p.m. suddenly my defects of judging this man and that man, accompanied by some expectations from them, attacked me. I was almost upset to see them still lurking in me. Fortunately as suddenly everything became quiet within and I recollected Mother saying once that we should be happy to notice our defects, for it would give us a chance to conquer them. Then I remembered Sri Aurobindo's writing the same thing to me, and instead of being upset a quiet will and aspiration arose to face and reject them, keeping myself detached. Then there was relief and a feeling that the proper attitude had come.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, all depends on that. For so long as they are not rejected altogether, they will try to rise.

13.4.33

MYSELF: Mother, this time I must come out of this vicious circle. Whatever may be the difficulty, I must not succumb but rise above it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Keep to that and it will be much easier. It is the getting upset that depresses the consciousness and the strength and so gives the enemy their chance.

14.4.33

(To be continued)

(Sahana's letters translated by Nirodbaran from the original Bengali)

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of May 1982)

The Mother's Message

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



II

Now I was busy tracing the design of the blue birds on a big sheet of paper. I had to show the birds flying, as though in a series of gradations from big to small, and it took me long. At the same time I was decorating the next idol Maheshwari. When I was working, I forgot everything, but the rest of the day I sought for peace. I still felt unwell and so wrote to the Mother. She replied:

“I was just ready to answer this letter (I can write only early morning, as the rest of the day I am busy) and tell you not to worry because you are progressing well and things will be all right; little by little you will become more conscious and have a closer and clearer contact with the Divine, being aware of the Divine’s Presence and help. And now I receive your letter of this morning and I see that you have got unwell again, and I fear that it is because you have not received my answer as soon as you expected it. I am sorry for it—but you must learn to be patient because my life is full of work of one kind or another during 24 hours out of 24—and each kind of work must be at a special time....

“Patience, perseverance, endurance and a steady will are required for the *sadhana*—and, above all, a complete trust in the Divine’s Grace is quite indispensable. I am giving you all these things—receive them and keep them and everything will be all right.

“Certainly, you are not alone to have difficulties—many, many others have the same and worse difficulties. But there is hope for everyone, and the Grace is on all.”

There was really nothing to upset me, but all the same the Mother’s letter did just that. I suppose it was my wretched ego again. Anyway I was not well and felt most queer. But that did not justify the dreadful letter I wrote to the Mother. After sending it, I wished desperately to rectify my mistake. I had written that I knew I was not the only one to have difficulties, that I had no faith in her and did not love her. I had asked her why, if she was the Divine, she did not cure me instead of giving false promises that everything would be all right. I had also affirmed my incapacity and failure to make spiritual progress and so on. In reply to this tirade she wrote:

“My dear child,

“Why are you, once more, writing when you are in a bad mood and expressing things that must not be expressed nor thought?

“You had promised not to write when you are under an adverse influence and never lend your mind, your tongue and your pen to the suggestions of the enemy. All thoughts and feelings of discouragement and despondency come from him and have not to be listened to.

“I have assured you yesterday that the truth is for you just the opposite of these nasty suggestions of incapacity and failure. Will you believe the suggestions of the devil more than my truthful assurance?”

I also received a card that very morning from the Mother saying:

“Remain sheltered in my arms, enveloped in my love and blessings.”

I did not go to the Mother in the evening because I was much too disturbed. I

sent a note telling her that I was not worthy of her Grace. I sent a pink rose with it. I did not expect an answer but she sent me a rose and wrote from the Playground:

“My dear little child,

“I have received your flower, the pretty rose—I had prepared this rose for you and was expecting you.

“For the Grace there is nothing like ‘worthy’ or ‘unworthy’ and in all she does or says, there is always the same unchanging love and compassion.”

As soon as I received this note, I ran to the Mother and she received me in her loving arms. I felt the tears of repentance fill my eyes so that I could hardly see her. I bent my head and pressed, for one instant, my lips against her hand. Then she held my hands and went into a trance for quite some time. Finally she gave me flowers and kissed me on my forehead. At that moment, I felt as if I had recovered from a long illness.

The next morning she sent me some white roses and a fine card with these words on it:

“My love is with you surrounding you with its strength and protection and my blessings never leave you.”

I felt better and set my heart once more to my work. I had almost finished the drawing of the blue birds.

At noon I had a vision of the Mother—she held my hand and gave me a luminous smile. I wondered what the meaning of it was.

In the evening, I wished to attend the French lesson but I could not go as I was completely exhausted. So I wrote instead the many questions which arose in my mind and also inquired the meaning of the vision I had had of the Mother. She answered:

“You ought to have come, I was expecting you and it would have done you some good.

“There is no meaning. It was *a fact*—I came to you, held your hand and smiled at you.

“I have replied already *so many times* and you are always asking the same thing as if you had completely forgotten what I have said. What I write is *true* and *remains true*; it need not be repeated again and again—you ought to remember and when the attack comes you must read my previous letter and see what I have answered to you in the previous case.

“On the contrary you accept the suggestion coming from the adverse force and you identify with it and write to me as if it were your own idea and your own will, and not that of an enemy.

“In that case, as I told you, I do the work silently, push the adverse force

away, wake you up again to your love for me which is your true being and your only hope of complete cure and salvation. As soon as the love is back I can write to you, forgetting and forgiving the past—but on your side you must not forget all this and must not fall again and again into the same trap.”

In answer to another question as to why I was attacked by the dark forces incessantly, she continued:

“Because you do not remember what I have told you and written to you—you *must* remember.

“I am always working to stop it—but you also must do your bit and not forget what I have said and done.

“You must never forget that this force that attacks you is *your enemy*, and you must *never side with it*. You must remember that your *love for me* is your *saviour* and will help to pull you out of the difficulty.

“I am always with you, helping you, protecting you, but you must not side with the enemy.”

Now the Mother brought her Force to bear on me more intensely than ever. Her Light reached the very source of my obscurity and defects, which now emerged one by one from the subconscious and came to the surface. To face each of them was a trial because these lower elements responded automatically to the hostile forces. The Mother positively wanted my whole being to be utterly perfect and well organised in the Light of the New Consciousness. She sent me a card with a pretty flower painted on it and these words:

“With all my love and blessings for a complete Victory.”

Indeed the Mother’s encouragement never ceased and she sent me yet another card showing African Marigolds, ‘Plasticity’, accompanied by these words:

“I am keeping you in my loving arms to protect you against all dangers. Remain there confidently and all will be well.

“With my love and blessings.”

I seemed too dull a person to respond readily. I felt as if I were just a block of wood. This inferiority complex continued to torment me day and night. My conscience gave me no peace.

On the last day of April, the Mother sent me these lines:

“Bonjour to my dear little child, to my sweet and loving Huta,

“I had your nice letter and will see your drawing in the playground this

afternoon. I would like to hear also what you have to tell me—perhaps there itself. Because for a few days more I have so many visitors to see before they leave, that I do not have a minute free, neither in the morning nor in the afternoon. But my love and help are always with you and my blessings do not leave you.”

The Mother saw the drawing of the blue birds and liked it. I was now asked to trace them on to her white dress and paint them. Well, I had to make the dress first! But I was determined to do it.

In reply to something, I spoke to the Mother about the ways of living and about attachment. She said:

“I cannot understand why people are so much attached to one way or another of living. When they want to do Yoga they must not give much importance to such things. It is quite true that everybody has different tastes and different ways. So according to that I am doing the best I can for everyone.”

My people left Pondicherry for Africa. My thoughts rambled on, I was seized with a sensation of extraordinary loneliness. All the while like a throbbing under-current in my mind were thoughts of disaster: My people have gone, I am alone—the Mother is busy with other people—suppose I cannot reach my goal—suppose I fail in the spiritual quest—what will happen to my life?

My heart was beating painfully and that feeling of intense loneliness and depression deepened a hundredfold. I wept bitter tears of frustration and agony within the four walls of my room.

I went to the Mother in the evening. I felt those incredibly bright blue-grey eyes were full of intimate comfort, there was a glowing warmth in them.

Now instead of going occasionally to the Mother's room in the Playground for her blessings, I went every evening. Before attending the French class, I used to leave in her room the flowers she had given me and I would pick them up afterwards when going home. Sometimes people caught the Mother on her way to her room in order to ask one thing or another, and that is why I could go to her room before her. It often happened that I came out of her room with the flowers as she was about to enter. Once as she saw me coming out, she laughed softly and put her arms around my shoulders and led me inside once again. Then she gave me some more flowers, drew me very close to her and kissed my forehead and cheeks—and my soul nestled in the sweet safety of her Love. The tenderness of her soothing arms encircled me and the fragrance of the delicate perfume she wore enchanted and enveloped my being. Sometimes the Mother ran her right hand down my spine and I felt powerful tingling vibrations.

Those were moments I will always cherish in my innermost heart.

Sri Aurobindo has written in Cent. Ed, Vol. 24, p. 1147:

“The spine is the main channel of the descent and ascent of the Force, by which it connects the lower and the higher consciousness together.”

*

May is always a very hot month in Pondicherry and this one was no exception. What with the severe heat and the constant psychological struggle, my health left much to be desired and it did not improve. I wrote to the Mother and she replied on a card showing the flowers called *Gladiolus*:

“I am sending these flowers of ‘receptivity’ to enable you to receive fully my love and help and strength so that your body becomes quite all right and your mind is cleared from all difficulties.”

The Mother sent me a reminder written in red ink:

“Do not forget your soul. Remember your aspiration. You are born for the Divine and you will find the Divine.

“My love, help and blessings are always with you. Keep your door open to receive them.”

I immersed myself in my work. Now the idol of Maheshwari was almost finished. Sometimes in the evening, I had to ask the Mother many things regarding my work. One evening I asked her how to make the aureole for Maheshwari and she said that a golden star with twelve rays should go behind her head. Then suddenly she went into a trance with half-closed eyes for a few seconds. She held my hand and said serenely:

“Maheshwari is so grand, royal and magnificent.... Sri Aurobindo has given a wonderful description of her in his book *The Mother*.”

And a happy smile touched her lips. Much later I read about Maheshwari in *The Mother*, pp. 50-51:

“Imperial MAHESHWARI is seated in the wideness above the thinking mind and will and sublimates and greatens them into wisdom and largeness or floods with a splendour beyond them. For she is the mighty and wise One who opens us to the supramental infinities and the cosmic vastness, to the grandeur of the supreme Light, to a treasure-house of miraculous knowledge, to the measureless movement of the Mother’s eternal forces....”

That night I wrote to the Mother saying that perhaps I should not trouble her

by going to her in the evening and asking so many questions. The next morning she answered:

“I have read your nice letter and know very well that you do not want to give me trouble or take my time, but I know also that you need to come to me and I approve of your coming daily in the playground. When I have some time I shall give you more time; the days of lessons, when I am in a hurry, I will just take your nice flowers, give you a flower and take you in my arms for a minute to give you concrete strength and protection, and like that your coming to me will not at all be disturbing and everything will be all right.

“I intend, today, to send you at mid-day (through Gautam)¹ some *prasad* just to give you an appetite and encourage you to eat well.

“My love and blessings are *always* with you.”

At mid-day the Mother sent me *prasad* in a small stainless steel vessel. I opened it and lo! the first thing I saw was a small green insect among the boiled vegetables. Well, since it was *prasad*, I had to eat it. I removed the insect and shared the vegetables with Maniben.

In the evening, the Mother asked me whether I had liked the *prasad* and I replied: “Yes, indeed, and I thank you for it.” Then, after a pause, I said to her hesitatingly “But, Mother, there was a tiny insect in it! And I must let you know too that I shared the *prasad* with Maniben as we take our lunch together. Do you mind?” She laughed and said:

“No, but then I must send more *prasad* to you. And as for the insect, I will see to it.”

Once again she laughed and patted my cheek. How generous she was!

I said, “Please don’t bother to send more *prasad*, and I only told you of the insect because people should be more scrupulous about your food.”

From then on, she started to send me *prasad* regularly, but I was told strictly that certain things I should not share with anybody because she had concentrated on them. Gradually she started sending me varieties of food in small elegant vessels. She even sent milk with ground almonds in a bottle, successively for three days. She always put a stress on the number three. The Mother herself told me that she was very particular about the food she sent. She mixed different kinds of mashed boiled vegetables in soup, tasted the soup, concentrated on it and then it came to me along with other delicious food. Now Mona brought the *prasad* from the Mother for me.

I remembered that Mona had always a pleasant smile on her face. Her good will towards me is the same today and I appreciate it.

Every morning, without fail, the Mother sent also a beautiful card together with

¹ A young sadhak who used to work in the Mother’s apartment.

lovely white roses. I wondered why she always sent me white roses and one day she revealed the reason:

“My child whenever I see white roses they remind me of your heart—so pure....”

On another occasion she held in her hand a full-blown white rose and said with a charming smile:

“Look at this rose, isn't it pretty? This is your soul—so pure, sweet and beautiful....”

Then, after pressing the rose against her heart and caressing it, she gave it to me. Unhappily, I could not see what the Mother saw. She alone knew what she was doing.

Whenever she sent or gave me a bouquet, it always consisted of different kinds of white flowers. But roses were always my favourite flowers. When I received white roses from the Mother, I looked at them for quite some time and kissed them tenderly while pressing them against my heart with closed eyes. I felt that they conveyed a mute and subtle message:

“O lover of Beauty, we are the messengers of the Divine. We are born in clay, but we are above it and are untouched by thorns. We are selfless roses—each with a sweet mild fragrance and a tender heart.

“Our soft hearts, when they go to the Divine, prostrate themselves at her feet and she casts her luminous gaze on us with a warm smile and an immense love. We fill our hearts with her love and sweetness. Then we spread the scent of love and sweetness to attract your soul.

“In our silent speech we communicate with your true self. The Divine has put force, love, tenderness, sweetness and all the splendid gifts you need in our pure hearts. She sends us to you to make you more and more conscious and consecrated to her. Always, at every moment, we remind you of your goal and kindle in you the fire of aspiration.

“We diffuse our fragrant and soothing vibrations to awaken fully your soul which embraces our hearts fondly and tenderly and feels happy by merging in the divine bliss. Indeed, the human mind cannot fathom our mysteries.

“Finally, we wish in all sincerity that you may be one with the Infinite.”

The message ceased and once again I kissed the roses gently and arranged them near the Mother's photograph. White roses signify: “Pure spiritual surrender.” This meaning was originally given by Sri Aurobindo. The Mother gave also the meaning: “Integral love for the Divine.” Her comment on it was: “Pure, com-

plete and irrevocable, it is a love that gives itself for ever.”

I have got a massive collection of the most exquisite cards with her luminous words written on them. There is not a single card which does not carry her Force. When the Mother sent me cards with pictures of flowers on them, she usually wrote the significances of the flowers underneath the pictures.

“Consciousness in the full supramental Light”, “Promise of realisation”, “Generosity”, “Power of expression”, “Cheerfulness in artistic work”, “Future success” “Eternal smile—the smile that disperses all clouds”, “Idealism”, “Aristocracy of beauty”, “Victory”, “Aesthetic taste in work”, “Cheerfulness in work”, “Collaboration”, “Emotional movement opening to the Divine’s Light”, “The emotional movement aspiring for the Divine’s Light”....

There seemed no end to them. All the Mother’s letters concluded with a perpetual reassurance of her love and blessings, and the constant Presence of the Divine’s Grace.

(To be continued)

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A DREAM-VISION

It was in February that I had this dream-vision but I have forgotten the exact date.

I had been aspiring for the Divine's Love for a long time, and feeling that it was the only love worth having. All human love seemed to me nothing compared to it, and most unreliable.

At the beginning of this dream-experience, I saw Sri Aurobindo seated on a large throne-like chair. The Mother was standing on his left, dressed in a white salwar and kamize. She had a white kitty-cap on her head. The whole room was filled with a deep calm and a golden light was everywhere.

People were approaching Sri Aurobindo one by one and He gave them some petals of the flower whose significance is "The Divine's Love". There were many people in this big room, but I don't remember any of them.

When my turn came, I went to Him in a humble way and He smiled and gave me the petals with His soft and loving hands. But as soon as I was in front of the Mother, She took these petals from me and, wrapping them in a piece of white paper, returned them to me with Her sweet smile saying, "Like this you won't lose any of them." I felt very grateful and happy and then woke up gradually.

I wonder what these words mean. Amal tells me that "white" is the Mother's own colour and that it also signifies both purity and tranquillity, which may be thought of as states in which the Divine's Love can most be retained. He adds that as the Mother's own colour it would also imply a call to us to be receptive to her presence in order to keep Sri Aurobindo's gift of love safe.

One point, however, remains strange. The Mother was to Sri Aurobindo's left. Always at Darshan time she used to sit on his right.

LALITA

Editor's Note

In a recent dream-vision of mine the Mother was seen sitting beside Sri Aurobindo in the same position as above. But after I had bent down at Sri Aurobindo's feet, taken his blessing and started to rise and look up, suddenly the Mother appeared on his right and accepted my Pranam. A flow of love, deeper, wider and intenser than the normal experience, went from the heart-centre towards both of them. It left no room to think of the Mother's odd position. But on waking up I could not help considering the double riddle: why was the Mother initially to the left of Sri Aurobindo and why did she switch on to the position to which I had been accustomed?

Is a different position natural to the subtle worlds? Do we have a clue to it in the sculpture of the half-male half-female divinity in the Elephanta Caves, where the half-female is the left side and the half-male the right of the composite figure?

REVIVAL OF THE VEDIC VISION

MODERN scholars have written many research volumes on ancient and medieval Hindu religion, philosophy and literature. I have had an opportunity to read and reflect over some of this research. As I review in my own mind whatever I have read, I am left with a strong, though general, impression.

My impression is that they divide the Hindu heritage in these fields into two broad traditions—Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical. In the former they include the Vedas, the Mahabharata, the Puranas, the Dharmashastras, Valmiki, Kalidasa, Shankara, Ramanuja, Nimbarka, Madhavacharya, Vallabhacharya, Chaitanya, Tulsi-das, etc. In the latter they include the Buddhist and the Jaina sacred literature; the works of the Siddhas, the Shaktas and certain schools of Tantra; and the Songs of the Nirguna Saints of medieval India.

Next they characterise the “Brahmanical” tradition as full of polytheism, rituals, priestcraft, caste orthodoxy, supremacy of the Brahmin, disparagement of women, violence and warfare. Side by side, they label the “non-Brahmanical” lore as esoteric, devoid of rituals and priestcraft, denunciatory of caste and sex distinctions, and prescribing peace and non-violence.

Some of these scholars are quite explicit in denigrating the “Brahmanical” tradition as “reactionary and revivalist” and upholding the “non-Brahmanical” contributions as “progressive and reformist”. Others are not so explicit, though their innuendos suggest that they share the same opinion.

Our ancient spiritual literature *does* speak of two traditions. But they are never and nowhere associated with a social class or caste. On the contrary, they represent two distinct paths of spiritual seeking and world-processing.

The two traditions are named as Brahmana and Sramana in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. But the term “Brahmana” in this context is derived from “Brahma” and denotes the Vast, the all-embracing. Similarly, the term “Sramana” is derived from “Srama” and stands for great endeavour, austerity, asceticism, etc.

The Upanishads also identify these traditions as *etadvai tad* (this also is that) and *neti neti* (not this, not this). The *Gita* describes them as two *nishthas*, Samkhya and Yoga, associated respectively with Jnana and Karma.

Sri Aurobindo named them as Rishi (Sage) tradition and Muni (Saint) tradition. They can also be described as Dharma and Moksha traditions to bring out their meanings more pointedly.

It is, therefore, nothing short of mischievous to use the terms ‘Brahmanical’ and ‘non-Brahmanical’ for these two traditions. The earliest use of these terms by certain Indologists seems motivated also. The motive was partly missionary and partly political. Its object was to malign the Brahmins, the inheritors and repositories of our ancient heritage. Pargiter discovered in the Puranas a “Kshatriya” tradition also as contrasted with the “Brahmanical” tradition. Luckily, the “discovery” did not become popular amongst modern scholars.

What is still more mischievous and motivated is to read socio-political significance in the two traditions and characterise the one as “reactionary and revivalist” and the other as “progressive and reformist”. The Brahmana tradition has a wealth of Mokshashastras as well as Dharmashastras. But the Sramana tradition, while it abounds in Mokshashastras, has hardly any Dharmashastras worth the name. It is, therefore, quite unwarranted and arbitrary to compare or contrast their respective prescriptions on mundane matters. The relevant data is simply not available in the Sramana tradition.

Tracing this misrepresentation of the Brahmana tradition to its source, we find that it originated in a misinterpretation of the Veda from which this tradition springs. The modern scholars saw the Veda as compositions of primitive Aryan tribes who had invaded India from outside and driven away its native inhabitants, “the more civilised Dravidians”, to the South of the Peninsula. These semi-barbarous people could not be credited with any deep spirituality or high philosophy. They were only capable of investing the natural forces around them with divinity, worshipping these forces as so many gods, appeasing those gods with sacrifices and, in return, demanding wealth and victory from them. These “scholarly” conclusions were supported by the modern “sciences” of Comparative Philology, Comparative Mythology and Comparative Religion.

It was, therefore, a great turning point in India’s spiritual and cultural history when Maharshi Dayananda challenged this modern version of the Veda and revived the old Hindu tradition of revering it as the source and centre of all authentic spirituality, philosophy and science. He challenged modern scholarship to prove that the Veda contained any history. And he appealed to the Hindus to go back to Yaska and Panini to find a key to the true interpretation of the Veda rather than depend on Sayana who wrote at a time when the ancient tradition of Vedic scholarship had been lost and the real message of the Veda obscured. He wrote his *Rigvedabhasya-bhumika* as a guideline for his way of approaching the Veda.

Maharshi Dayananda was followed by Sri Aurobindo who expounded the Vedic vision in a series of great books which also embody his Yogic explorations—*The Secret of the Veda*, *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, and *Savitri*, an epic poem of profound proportions. It is the privilege of Smt. Gauri Dharmapal to tell us the very interesting story of how Sri Aurobindo came to the Veda and what he found there (*Veda O Sri Aurobindo*, Sri Aurobindo Pathmandir, Calcutta, August 1981).

Smt. Dharmapal has been a keen student of the Veda which she has been translating into beautiful Bengali poetry. She has had the advantage of a long and close association with Sri Anirvana who passed away a few years ago. He was primarily a saint and a mystic. But his scholarship in the field of Vedic literature was perhaps unsurpassed in our times. He wrote almost entirely in Bengali. But a sample of his profound insight into the spiritual reaches of the Veda can be had from his long essay *Vedic Exegesis*, which forms the first article in the very first volume of *Our Cultural*

Heritage published by the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta.

It is very difficult for me to translate into English the poetic Bengali prose of Smt. Dharmapal. I have only a working knowledge of both Bengali and English. My knowledge of Sanskrit is also poor when compared to Smt. Dharmapal's command over it. I will, therefore, only summarise what she says and quote her only when I fail to convey her meaning faithfully.

In the first Chapter of her book Smt. Dharmapal summarises the doubts which arose in Sri Aurobindo's mind regarding the validity of modern scholarship vis-à-vis the Veda. He confesses that, to start with, he also shared the views pioneered by this scholarship. His first doubts arose when he arrived at Pondicherry and closely observed the Tamil people as well as the Tamil language. He could not help concluding that, by and large, the Tamil people represented the same physical and cultural type as people of the north. He also examined the Tamil language and found it far closer to Sanskrit than was supposed by modern scholars. He, therefore, wondered how the "barbaric" Aryan invaders were able to impose their own race, language, religion, ideas and manners on the "civilised" Dravidians. So he took up the Veda in the original for the first time. He took no time in discovering that the racial division between the Aryans and the Dravidians popularised by modern scholars rested on very flimsy foundations. But what interested him most was the discovery that, first, the Vedic *mantras* many times illumined his own Yogic experiences and, secondly, they shed a new light on many obscure passages and episodes in the Upanishads and the Puranas. Now he could not resist the conclusion that the Veda had "a constant vein of the richest gold of thought and spiritual experience running all through it".

In the words of Smt. Dharmapal, "He who at one time was translating into English the writings of the great Greeks like Plato, now started to translate Sanskrit works into English.... Legend has it that Pondicherry's ancient name was Vedapuri where Agastya had established his ashram. Knowingly or unknowingly, the same Vedapuri, sanctified by the *sadhana* of the great Rishi, was chosen for his *sadhana* by the modern seer of Divine Life, the poet of an oceanic consciousness."

In the second Chapter of her book Smt. Dharmapal presents the Veda as the source of all our culture throughout the ages. In her own words, "The Veda is that inexhaustible treasure-house of Bharatamata from which have flown all schools of thought, all sects, all religions, all philosophies, all sciences, mythologies, legends, Dvaita, Advaita, Dvaitadvaita, Sat, Asat, Sunya, Purna, No, Yes, Nishshreyas, Abhudaya, that are to be found in Bharatabhumi." We have lost neither the language nor the spirituality of the Veda, she says. What, then, have we lost? We have lost the link between the language and the vision of the Veda, she propounds. And she argues convincingly that Sri Aurobindo has recovered that link and restored it to its rightful place in the interpretation of the Veda.

This is not the place to present the guidelines laid down by Sri Aurobindo for a correct understanding of the Vedic sacrifice, Vedic gods, and so on. The subject is difficult and very deep. People who are interested can read her monograph as a pre-

lude to reading the great works of Sri Aurobindo himself. I will conclude by quoting appropriate passages from Sri Ram Swarup's recently published book, *The Word As Revelation: Names of Gods*, because he has also tried to seek the link between Vedic language and Vedic spirituality.

Sri Ram Swarup raises the problem as follows: "Can we understand the mentality of the seers of the Vedas—humanity's oldest extant scripture—by studying their language? Or can we understand the import of their language by entering into the state of their mind?"

The study of language, according to Sri Ram Swarup, reveals three layers of meanings—physical, subtle and causal: "In the first reside the more dominant and direct physical meanings of a word... These meanings are within easy reach of ordinary minds.... The subtle body contains many seed-meanings which are psychological and psychic in character.... Here the meanings are not entirely out of reach and they are revealed to a reflective mind.... The third sheath is the subtlest and it contains noumenal meanings which also support all the phenomenal meanings of a word, mental or physical.... This is the highest status of a word and it remains invisible. Its summit or core is hidden in the heart; which means that its meanings are not revealed to the sensuous and reasoning mind but they are accessible to the intuitive mind."

How do we recover the highest meanings of a word? Sri Ram Swarup writes: "The Yogas use the method of concentration and meditation for entering into the larger meanings of a word, for penetrating its outer coverings. Meditation consists in turning away from the outward appearances of objects to their underlying luminous forms, and then to their deeper sources in the mind."

The miracle that happens is described by him as follows: "Meditation brings interiorization. Behind gross forms, we begin to see luminous forms; behind luminous forms, figures of the Godhead. The sensuous and *manas*-experiences become ideas of the mind, become categories of the intellect, become images and powers of the psyche, become attributes of the Self, become Names of Gods, become Names of the Name. The concrete becomes the vehicle of the abstract; the many are interpenetrated by the One. The manifest reveals the Unmanifest."

Coming to the Veda and other ancient Hindu literature like the Mahabharata, Ram Swarup notices three distinctive features—a very large use of concrete images for the names of Gods such as Surya, Agni, Marut; a plurality of Gods; and a multiplicity of the names of each God. Contemplating these characteristics of Vedic spirituality, Ram Swarup concludes: "According to Hindu thought, too, the Names of Gods are not names of external beings. These are names of the truths of man's own highest Self. So the knowledge of the epithets of Gods is a form of self-knowledge. Gods and their names embody truths of the deeper Spirit and meditation on them in turn invokes those truths. But those truths are many and, therefore, Gods and their names too are many, though they are all held together in the unity of a spiritual consciousness."

A revival of the Vedic vision in India is of great importance today when Hindus are tending to forget the fundamental unity of their manifold spiritual, cultural and social traditions. It is true that Hindu Dharma is a way of life. But it needs recollecting that this way of life has a spiritual centre. The way of life will be lost if the spiritual centre is not allotted its due place, its place of primacy.

Viewed in this perspective, the two traditions of *Sanātana Dharma* cease to be contradictory and become complementary. Says the Gita: “In this world, two-fold is the self-application of the soul, as I said before, O Sinless One—that of the Sankhyas by the Yoga of Knowledge, that of the Yogins by the Yoga of Works (3.3)... Children speak of Sankhya and Yoga apart from each other, not the wise. If a man applies himself integrally to one, he gets the fruits of both (5.4).”

SITA RAM GOEL

(Courtesy, ORGANISER, New Delhi)

THE POETIC, THE IDEALISTIC, THE SPIRITUAL

A CORRESPONDENCE IN PERSONAL TERMS

I

Dear Amal Kiran,

I went through your poem "This Hand", dated 10.6.1970, and found it very fascinating. Let me set it before you again so as to make my remarks more relevant.

This hand, small hungerer for infinities,
Craving the whole future of earth's flowers, outstretching
Five fingers to the million-lustred sun,
Praying that invisible breasts of goddesses
Shape it to a dream that wings beyond all deeds—
This hand is ever empty, ever open
Lest there be an end to the mystery in life's heart,
The beat of a rapture-rhythm with no name,
Call of a deep that shakes the silent stars.

A marvellous evocative expression of cosmic truth is "the million-lustred sun". Similarly generic in function is the frequent use of plurals: "infinities...flowers...goddesses...deeds...stars." One has the pleasure of plenty.

The mysterious power of "this hand" is to reconcile contraries, to unite the temporal and the eternal. The sad conditions of human life are cancelled. Your "five fingers" are unwearied like the pictures on the Grecian Urn. The short, strong poem has thoughts which take me to some serious contemplation. I feel myself lost in the following lines:

Praying that invisible breasts of goddesses
Shape it to a dream that wings beyond all deeds...

Do you want to pray because these goddesses will guard "this hand" against chaos, against shapelessness? It is the Romantic Movement's technique—"dark hair, tidal water, landscape at dusk" are dissolved in your mind, as often in dreams which cannot be attached to any intellectual significances.

A sensitive rhythm is apparent from the very opening of the poem. Its sounds intensify the hunger and help us to imagine the tremendous striving to bring down "infinities". The assonances in "ever empty, ever open" strike a compassionate note, indeed a delightful truth. On the one side there is mere negation, the absence of what is desired: on the other side the possession of the otherness of life. The leisurely lucid movement of the last line works out the highest pitch. The intensity of hunger is cooled down by the sibilants:

Call of a deep that shakes the silent stars.

The last line is satisfying like the famous "gathering swallows twitter in the skies".
I hope you will excuse my tentative appreciation.

S. K. SINHA

Dear Prof. Sinha,

It was a pleasure to get your letter. Poets, no doubt, are essentially content to sing to "the silent stars" but they would be more strengthened to do so if now and then an eloquent response from a fellow-being came to them. Your appreciation is welcome—and this not only to the man in me but also to the poet proper, for you have responded with some attention to particularities. The very soul of poetry is a moved precision of sight and insight—and a critic's value lies, from the poet's point of view, in his intelligent feel of the various detailed intensities which cohere and fuse within the poetic whole or, to put the matter perhaps more correctly, which form diverse concrete concentrations of the emotional and visionary unity that is a poem.

May I add a shade or two of interpretation? In the line—

Call of a deep that shakes the silent stars—

what you have noted is certainly there as a result of whatever inspiration was behind it. But along with the "leisurely lucid movement" and the cooling down of all hunger by the sibilants, there is intermingled the thrill of a vast presence at once intense and immense and therefore a paradox of passionate tranquillity and intimate transcendence—the Supreme Unknown that yet satisfies every hunger. And I may remark that the word "shakes" goes with "Call" and images the twinkle-tremble of the constellated night-sky: the suggestion is meant to be the shining forth of a lofty universal answer to the attraction of a divine deep of creative rapture which alone can consummate with its unnamable "yonder to all ends" the heart stretching out

This hand, small hungerer for infinities.

Your comparison of the poem's closing line with the close of Keats's "Ode to Autumn"—

And gathering swallows twitter in the skies—

is not altogether happy. From the purely artistic viewpoint, there is a comparable play of sibilants, but their disposition and therefore their effect are not the same. The significance is of course totally different except for the word "skies" which has an affinity to "deep" and "stars". The affinity, however, is accidental and not organic.

As to the verses—

Praying that invisible breasts of goddesses
Shape it to a dream that wings beyond all deeds—

there is in them not just the prayer to be guarded by goddesses against chaos, not merely the Romantic Movement's dream-dusk of the indefinable. They bring a blend of mysticism with what you have called, in another letter about an earlier poem, "the sensational potency of the poet". I could have used "limbs" instead of "breasts", but then that potency would have been lowered and I would have been also false to the fact that mysticism can very well go with this potency at its utmost and yet not involve any sexuality. Besides, "limbs" is too overflowing, as it were, for the specifically outlining suggestion of "hand". The basic emotion and vision may be stated thus:

"I do not wish my hand to grasp immediate finite beauty, the breasts of transient earthly women. My hand should move beyond being filled—and fulfilled—with such delights as have limits and come to a close in earthly deeds. Towards the super-human, the supra-terrestrial, the perfect, the archetypal, the deific I would strain: breasts that are real and yet without visible termination, delights that from some beautiful Beyond would charge my hand with a passion for the boundless and mould so the attitude of the fingers as to make them long for the loveliness that exceeds all known sensational potencies and that can never be exhausted by ordinary achievement, ordinary possession—such are the boons I pray for."

AMAL KIRAN

2

Dear A... E...,

"Dawn over Athens"—you are lucky to have watched it from the plane. I wish I could have shared the sight. But actually I don't need to. Athens is always a dawn in my inner consciousness—a persisting glow from a distant epoch, almost like a beginning of my life on the planet: at least I have no living intuition of anything beyond Greece's golden age. No wonder that, while about other past births of mine Sri Aurobindo has conveyed to me nothing more than "impressions", he has stated that both the Mother and he found it perfectly certain and evident that I had been an ancient Athenian.

People have sometimes asked me to comment on the implications of our Master's statement. May I take this opportunity to put down something at a little length? I don't like very much to talk about myself, but here a few general truths of culture and psychology are involved. So I may be excused for an approach to them in a personal vein.

Let me pose the question: "What would it mean to be an organic element of ancient Athens?" I should answer that one would be infused with:

1. The vision of a changeless Super-World *à la* Plato, where shine forever the Divine Models, the Archimages, of all that is passing and fragmentary on the earth.

2. The search, even on the earth, for the inner guiding principle of all developing things, Aristotle's "Entelechy" or "Realised-goal within" in a general way, and in a particular manner the secret "Daimon" or "Heart-oracle" such as Socrates always heard.
3. The sense of freedom by which the individual is able to move in whatever direction attracts him and to live without fear, run after ideas up to the utmost horizon and strive to materialise them in the most perfect form both in the region of the mind and in the world of the body.
4. The sense of the "Polis", the city, to which Aristotle's famous but misunderstood definition "Man is a political animal" points—the "Polis", in which, according to the Platonic dream, all the individual freedoms choose to live by a glad self-limitation so as to create a multiple harmony—parts distinctive, well-carved in themselves and yet joining together to be felt as one whole.
5. A living movement of Art and especially of Poetry as exemplified by the major dramatists Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides—a movement about which Sri Aurobindo has said: "From beginning to end it dealt with life from one large view-point, that of the inspired reason and the enlightened and chastened aesthetic sense; whatever changes overtook it, it never departed from this motive which is of the very essence of the Greek spirit."

Surely, the ancient Athenian that was I has undergone many other shapings, taken the colour of moods different from those of the place which Pindar immortalised:

O shining white and famed in song and violet-wreathed,
Fortress of Hellas, glorious Athens, city of God!

Especially old Persia, the homeland of us present-day Parsis, and ever-youthful India where to live freely with their religion of "fire-worship" my ancestors took refuge from their Arab conquerors—the tempers of these two countries have entered deeply into my being through tradition.

Herodotus reports of Persian education: "To ride the horse, to shoot straight with the bow, to tell the truth." These are activities at once physical and symbolic. Horse-riding can connote the mental mastery over a splendour and swiftness of vital force. Expert archery may stand for a direct flight towards the centre of all that beckons elusively from the far and the future. Invariable truth-telling would signify the tuning of one's entire nature to the inmost soul in one, which is a reflex of some supreme Verity—the inner Fire echoing with an undeviating response the God-gold above.

As for India, there is her cry ringing down the ages: "No happiness in the small: the immense alone is felicity" or else "What shall I do with all this if it will not give me Immortality?" Indeed, keen hearing of that cry has brought me to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—but that cry as a commingler rather than as a denier of all else in me,

for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother carry the whole world's culture towards a spiritual consciousness which is markedly India-coloured yet is one where even India transcends her own past.

The thrust towards synthesis, which is so typical of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, harmonises easily two other currents in my nature. I was educated at a Roman Catholic school and college. There is in me the attraction to a Christianity like St. Augustine's, minus whatever exclusiveness and angularities it developed from a reaction against the paganism of its day—a Christianity drawing nourishment from both Classical Athens and Classical Rome while turning beyond them to address the Eternal with the poignant rapture of the phrase: "O Beauty of ancient days yet ever new, too late have I loved Thee!" Along with the rich other-worldliness of the Augustinian Christian, I find myself charged with what Sri Aurobindo has called "the undulating many-sidedness and wideness of the modern mind". I have been exposed very keenly to the *Zeitgeist*. This is not an unnatural sequel to a probable past life during the European Renaissance, which Sri Aurobindo counted as an "impression" of his about me, together with one about the time of the 17th century "Metaphysical" poets in England. Their ingenious turn, too, links easily with "the modern mind". But you may have noticed that in the midst of subtleties and complexities my poems invariably tend to show—in the words of a fellow Aurobindonian poet—"the chaos-ending chisel-smite". A defined shape is sought to be worked out—a beginning, a middle and an end—the effect of a whole, which I consider indispensable—and which Sri Aurobindo too never forgot in his criticisms—side by side with those three prerequisites listed by him at several places: "intensity of vision, intensity of word, intensity of rhythm." Here once more it is the ancient Athenian in me at play: Classical Greece's essential sense of overall Form.

AMAL KIRAN

P.S. The ingenious part of me—not necessarily always divorced from intuition—would like to point out that "K. D. Sethna", which is my original name, as distinguished from the special Ashram one given by Sri Aurobindo, has in its last component—"Sethna"—an acrostic of "Athens"!

A further step of ingenuity may try to align even the special name to what was ancient Athenian in one aspect. Sri Aurobindo explained "Amal Kiran" as "The Clear Ray". Let us approach his explanation from the side of Greek poetry. Reason receiving inspiration from beyond itself—intellectual clarity touched by a higher radiance—along with the aesthetic sense cleared of crudity and thus chastened at the same time that it carries an enlightenment, the touch of an illuminating Ideal: such we may envisage to be in some detail "the essence of the Greek spirit" as seen by Sri Aurobindo. Have we not here in non-Yogic terms what Sri Aurobindo sought to evoke—surely with insufficient response—in the aspirant to his Integral Yoga by calling him "Amal Kiran"?

‘MOTHER, IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO MANAGE AN ASHRAM’

‘ASHRAM’ is a most cherished word in Indian life and literature. Sita, when banished, found shelter in the Ashram of Valmiki and there Lava and Kusha, her twin sons, were born and brought up. There they received a full education and became accomplished young men.

Earlier when Rama, Lakshman and Sita were together living in the forest undergoing their joint banishment, particularly during the initial period, Rama more than once dwelt upon the joys of living in the forest, visiting many Ashrams and meeting many Rishis. Similar is the sentiment of Yudhisthira when the Pandavas lived in the forest. His brothers and Draupadi worried over their misfortunes; and in a spirit of consolation he emphasised the great and unique kind of compensation they had in spending time at the holy places and in the company of holy persons.

Of course, the Ashrams reflected in different ages different qualities of life. But they were always the most honoured and cherished places for quietude, for peace, for consolation, for self-dedication to Truth and Perfection.

In 1958, on June 25th or so, the Mother called me and said more or less: ‘I want to send you to Jwalapur. You know the place (Sri Aurobindo Yoga Mandir). It has to be looked after as our Ananda is no more.’ I said, ‘Right, Mother.’ I soon arrived at the place and began to devote myself to its development as a centre of Sadhana. Soon afterwards the feeling grew clear in me that my work there was a training to me in a new field—of managing an Ashram. The explaining and expounding of Sri Aurobindo’s thought I had done before and that was easy. But here the work was truly integral. The land, the garden, the construction work, and above all men, sadhaks and non-sadhaks, their needs and fancies and all this in a situation of considerable hostility. I was obliged to turn to the Mother and rely on her more and more under the pressure of immediate practical necessities. And there was a steady firm faith within that the place was to serve some purpose. In course of time, sadhaks would live here, practise the Integral Yoga and it would all be wonderful. And the work there was a joy.

The Mother took a keen interest in the development of the place and my dedication to that work. Every time I came to Pondicherry, before I left to return to Jwalapur she would give me an interview and afford me the full opportunity to present my problems to her. Once on her own she said, ‘Do you know what an Ashram is?’ I kept quiet eagerly waiting to hear what the Mother was about to say. She said, ‘An Ashram is a place of concentration, of conservation... I do not want many people there...a few sincere people...’ I felt extremely happy to hear all that.

After these interviews had gone on for some time, on one occasion the Mother said right at the beginning, ‘No talking this time, only meditation.’ And gently she went into meditation and I also concentrated and put myself into contact and the best possible identification with her. I had a surprising experience of ascension.

After some time the Mother slowly started saying something. She commented upon the ascending movement, but soon started on a serious note. She said, 'Look here, I see at Jwalapur a person, short in size', and such and such and such. She gave many features, one after another, which I do not remember now but I could immediately recognise them and felt thrilled and excited. I cried out, 'Yes, yes, Mother, I know the person.' Then she said, 'You have to be careful.' I replied, 'Yes, Mother, I am aware of the person's attitude towards the Ashram.'

It was a very interesting experience indeed and it gave me a vivid feeling that the Mother knew what was going on at Jwalapur. This strengthened much my sense of her Presence there and the working out of her will. It was her will which had intended something there, was supporting the work there and seeing to its progress. But this mood, in a conscious form, was an occasional thing. Only much later could it be relatively more steady.

When I had been at that job of managing an Ashram and seen again and again my anger, irritation, annoyance, lack of forbearance, lack of plasticity, failure of sympathy, of understanding in the face of the aggressive and demanding nature of others, I continually felt how inadequate my capacities were for the task entrusted to me. This, of course, meant a keener and more persistent aspiration and prayer for imperturbability, for detachment and freedom, for sympathy and understanding. And that surely was good as sadhana. But it was no doubt, a hard sadhana.

While I was in that state of mind, I said to the Mother on one of my visits to Pondy, 'Mother, it is very difficult to manage an Ashram.' The Mother laughed and said, 'So, at last, you do realise that it is not easy to run an Ashram.' Her answer awakened in me my previous feeling too, that the management of an Ashram is rather a simple affair—here everybody has good will, is prepared to sacrifice, is a disciple, etc., etc.

But actually the problems of an Ashram seriously aiming at the spiritual unfoldment of its inmates are extremely subtle and difficult. It is easy enough to carry on administration through external pressure, through fear and punishment of one kind or another. But in that case the Ashram ignores its spiritual goal.

At one time an Indonesian professor had come and stayed at Pondicherry with his wife for a year. Before leaving he once spoke more or less in this strain to me, 'Indra Sen, can you explain why the Mother has been kind and nice to me during all my stay, while I have not been much drawn to Yoga? My wife has been, and the Mother's kindness to her is quite understandable. But why kindness to an indifferent person?'

Actually he was not an indifferent person. He was all along studying and trying to understand, but this intellectual interest had not yet gripped his will and emotions and, therefore, the practice of sadhana had not become an issue with him. Perhaps it had to some extent with his wife.

I had to give an answer to his query and I said, though not feeling clear within, 'Perhaps the Mother sees some possibility for the future in you.' And the matter

apparently ended there.

Those were the days when the Mother used to come to the Playground and we had the opportunity to go up to her for half a minute or more and say something. In those days we would even try to get an excuse to go to her. This contact with the professor had taken place during the day and the same evening, while seeing the Mother at the door of her room a little free or so, I felt I had something to say and ran up to her. I said to her, 'Mother, the Indonesian professor, who is now going away, asked me why you had been so nice to him while he had not been much interested in Yoga.' The Mother felt amused and with a smile said, 'What did you reply?' I was not clear and sure on the matter and, therefore, in a faltering sort of way reported what I had said to the professor, 'Perhaps the Mother sees some possibility in the future in you.' The Mother did not say anything, but she was not pleased with the answer. Next day at the Playground when she stood at her door and was a little free and saw me in the crowd, she called me and said, 'Has Nolini given you a chit I have given him for you?' I said, 'I shall collect it from him, Mother.' She said, 'All right, go and get it.'

I collected the chit. It was a longish strip of paper, which is with me still, and it bore one single sentence, which was, 'In the Divine Consciousness Compassion is unconditioned.' The Mother had written this on her return to the Ashram from the Playground the same evening and passed it on to Nolini that he might give it to me.

I read the sentence many times over and tried to apply it to the situation of the professor, but could not get the real point of the Mother's answer. It was beyond me at that stage of my inner growth. But years later after a long period of hard sadhana at Jwalapur it began to acquire meaning and become a strong objective by itself.

My hard sadhana had possibly reduced my angularities and rigidities and I began to appreciate the beauty and the power of a large, a wide and a high comprehending consciousness as the real need of managing an Ashram and I began to seek it, cherish it, correct myself after every lapse and hoped for an effective realisation of it. This appreciation of a wide, high, all-comprehending, all-commanding consciousness slowly brought home to me the meaning of the Mother's sentence. Compassion must naturally be the basic attitude and relation of the Divine Consciousness to all this lesser creation.

A large and wide and high consciousness slowly became a necessity of my work at Jwalapur and it began to produce results. I began to feel a confidence and a command over the situation I had not felt before. It was a great joy and the pursuit of that consciousness became engrossing and the varying situations of the Ashram became occasions for its application and opportunities for cultivating the same.

But this only meant a new Vision, the realisation of it was a far cry. Each problem and difficulty vividly showed and continues to show the imperfection of it. But that such a consciousness alone can competently handle the varying situations of an Ashram, devoted to a spiritual ideal, aiming at the inner growth of the aspirants, is a certainty. An inner identification with the Divine can alone enable one to do His

work. Then only can there be joy and effectivity in the work.

Jwalapur has been a nice sadhana to bring me to this appreciation, but the competence in the management of the Ashram is a thing of the future. Perhaps in the next incarnation I shall have better luck with such an assignment.

INDRA SEN

P.S. 'Better luck in the next incarnation' was the feeling of the writer in 1978-79 when the article was written. His present consciousness rather finds that it is really the Mother's job to manage the Jwalapur Ashram and she is most willing to do it, if he would let her do it.

SRI AUROBINDO AND PONDICHERRY

THEIR SPIRITUAL AND LINGUISTIC AFFINITY

SRI Aurobindo was born in Calcutta on 15.8.1872. He studied in England. He is well-known as a revolutionary patriot, poet, linguist, a commentator on the Veda, the Upanishads and the Gita and especially as the path-finder of a new yoga called by him Integral Yoga—a Yoga that, while assimilating all the past yogic disciplines, finds a key to the secret purpose of evolution on earth: progress towards the Divine Supermind as the destiny of Man. But what appears a little odd is why Sri Aurobindo should have been directed by the Inner Voice, which he calls Adesh, meaning Command, to go to Pondicherry in the far South, even when he was as safe and secure in that other French colony, Chandernagore, from the clutches of the British Raj. To this there has been no relevant answer, although it is said that Pondicherry was once a Veda Puri with a great Vedic college tracing itself back to the great sage, Agastya.

It is the humble attempt of this article to find that relevancy, the *raison d'être* behind the Adesh. It is well-known that Vedic Rishis sought places away from human habitation to continue their Sadhana. This has been called *apade pada dhātave*.¹ When Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry on April 4, 1910 from Chandernagore people used to wonder and say, “Sri Aurobindo has fixed upon a cemetery for his sadhana.”² Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga is certainly new in the sense that he is the first to find the path to the Supermind and invoke its descent into the earth-consciousness, although Vedic Rishis tried individually to rise to the Supermind but never thought of bringing down that power and establishing it on the earth to divinise man’s life just as mind was established and animality was transformed into humanity. Sri Aurobindo spoke of this in his *Letters on Yoga*³ as “a way to be opened that is still blocked.” The Vedic Rishis failed as the way was not open. So the Integral Yoga is a new Yoga. Sri Aurobindo was directed by the Adesh to go to Pondicherry to “unblock” the way for the Supramental Descent—the mission with which and for which he had been born.

Agastya was the Rishi who tried to “unblock” the way. Legend has it that he came down from the north to the south crossing the Vindhya mountains. The Vindhya were menacingly rising up and so Agastya travelled south with Lopamudra, and the Vindhya, like a disciple, bent low, giving him way. He ordered the Vindhya to be as they were till he returned. Never did he return but he settled down to spread Vedic culture: a Vedic college flourished over which he presided. His seat came to be named Veda Puri. It may not be out of place to note here that Agastya revealed

¹ *Vide Reminiscences* by Nolini Kanta Gupta and K. Amrita (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1969), p. 46.

² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³ Tome One, p. 149

the secret of *āditya hṛdayam* to Sri Rama just before the final battle between Sri Rama and Ravana, seeing that it would be impossible for Rama to defeat Ravana. This Aditya Hridayam is no other than the *sūrya sāvitṛī* Mantra. It is said in the *āditya hṛdayam* itself, “*ādityaḥ savitā sūryaḥ khagaḥ pūṣa gabhastimān.*” Is it not apposite that Agastya should communicate this to Sri Rama, with the power of which he defeated and killed Ravana? Agastya and Lopamudra came down south to establish here “Shaiva”, the Kingdom of God, in the outer world also, in a hundred, nay, a thousand ways. *Śatanītam, sahasranītam.*

The Mother is a partner in Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga. She founded the Ashram and it progressed under her loving care. Sri Aurobindo used to say his consciousness and the Mother’s are one and the same—the same consciousness in two, for that was required for the play. She is Aditi—*Aditiḥ devatāmāyī guhām previśya tiṣṭanti* (Katha 2-1-7), *aditaye syāma* (Rig Veda 1-24-15). Aditi is the infinite Consciousness and the primeval boundless Puissance out of whom all gods, even the supramental god, are projected. Hence Sri Aurobindo and the Mother together were to continue the work left unfinished by Agastya and consummate it in the descent of the Supermind. So the Adesh directed Sri Aurobindo to go to Pondicherry.

Another point is that Sri Aurobindo did Yoga for forty years at Veda Puri (Pondicherry) at the same place where Agastya did sadhana. This is confirmed by a French professor, M. Jouveau Dubreuil of Collège de France, who was doing research in ancient history and archaeology. Nolini Kanta Gupta and others knew him quite well. This professor was working on the early history of Pondicherry. He discovered that Pondicherry was the ancient Veda Puri and he located the exact spot where the Vedic college had been situated as that on which the main building of the Ashram now stands.¹ And may I add from my own information from the elders that Agastya did tapasya at the place where Sri Aurobindo’s room is? The spiritual connection between Pondicherry and Sri Aurobindo is established and thus the *raison d’être* behind the Adesh to go to Pondicherry is found.

Now how Veda Puri came to be called Pondicherry is to be seen. This is a linguistic or philological question. It is not as if John in English is Jean in French, Juan in Spanish. In Latin no doubt John is called Johannes. Even in this there is some apparent clue, although English is Teutonic and the others are Romanic. There is no such apparent clue between Veda Puri and Pondicherry. But Veda Puri was called so because the Vedas were studied there. Agastya is the presiding deity of that Vedic College. But the local people, the plebeians, might have known Agastya more than the Vedic College. So the village was presumably called Agastyagram—Village of Agastya. Agastya in Tamil is called PODIAN (பொடியன்). Chery is a village or a village in a jungle tract.² So Pondicherry would be, as I stated above, Agastyagram. So it is *à la génie de la langue* that with the French nasalisation Podiachery should become Pondicherry.

¹ *Reminiscences* p. 49.

² *Vide Little Flower and Co. Tamil-English Dictionary.*

Still how Agastya in Sanskrit, an Aryan language, became "Podian" in Tamil, a Dravidian language, is to be unravelled. A friend of mine suggests that the clue is to be found in Ulagam of Tamil which means Jagat, meaning World. But further probing is necessary and connected vocables should be looked into before a reasonable conclusion can be arrived at.

This distinction between Aryan and Dravidian languages is one of those divisions perpetrated by European scholarship, especially the Caldwellian confusing compartmentalisation. Many litterateurs in the south vehemently objected to this. Dr. Ch. Narayanarao in Andhra and Mr. Swaminathan Aiyar in Tamil Nadu suffered at the hands of the literary snobs. Sri Aurobindo did research and discovered that at times the Tamil vocables gave the clue, the missing link, between the so-called Aryan and Dravidian languages. He realised how false was the division made between them.

To end this article, let the great Sage-Seer himself speak with his living voice: "For on examining the vocables of the Tamil Language, in appearance so foreign to the Sanskrit form and character, I yet found myself continually guided by words or families of words supposed to be pure Tamil in establishing new relations between Sanskrit and its distant sister, Latin and occasionally between the Greek and the Sanskrit. Sometimes the Tamil vocable not only suggested the connection, but proved the missing link in a family of connected words. And it was through the Dravidian language that I came first to perceive what seems to me now the true law, origins and, as it were, the embryology of Aryan Tongues".¹

P. KRISHNAMURTI

¹ *Archives and Research*—April 1978, page 103.

SRI AUROBINDO—THE GURU

FROM time immemorial the Indian conception of a Guru is that highest Godhead which is not only divine in nature but equally divine in the quality of his action. Dakshinamurty who is symbolically represented with three faces was given the top place of honour as a Guru. The Guru is the embodiment of Divinity with the three faces of the Trinity of Indian mythology—Brahma the creator, Vishnu the protector, and Siva the destroyer. All supreme movements are his to exercise for his disciples.

But Gurus act in various ways. Ramana Maharshi of Tiruvannamalai practised the way of silence. People who went into his presence, having doubts and questions, sat in his august presence for an hour or two and felt their minds cleared, gained peace and returned satisfied.

There have been Gurus who held conversations and disseminated knowledge. Ramakrishna Paramahansa had long sessions of illumined instruction. There are wonderful talks of Sri Aurobindo also. His action without uttering a word is known as well. But perhaps his speciality may be said to be elsewhere. And it got manifested naturally through the circumstance of his withdrawing in November 1926 up to December 1950 from outer contacts for the sake of a concentrated Yoga to bring about the descent of the Supermind into the physical being.

Instead of having oral inquiries from the disciples, the method adopted by Sri Aurobindo was that the disciple should write down his experience and express clearly the difficulty he had. He went through the letter and gave a detailed reply to all the points raised. This practice came into full vogue when he retired into seclusion. Though the process of correspondence takes away a large bit of the Guru's time, this method has very many advantages from the disciple's point of view.

Firstly, the disciple learns to express clearly in words what he has felt and experienced. Thus develops in the disciple the capacity to express himself and his experiences in a precise and lucid way. The reply of the Guru is a treasure for the disciple. He can read it and re-read it in order to grasp the ideas of the Guru. It can be referred to whenever a similar difficulty occurs to him again or to anybody else. The chances of missing the Guru's teaching, on account of not properly hearing or properly understanding, is eliminated. The written word is made a living torch whenever the disciple wants light. Sri Aurobindo spent for years the whole of his night writing replies to the disciples in the note-books sent by them in the evening, with questions, doubts, seeking solutions to the problems with which they were confronted.

Sri Aurobindo communicated his force through the replies. He said: "If I have given importance to the correspondence, it is because it is an effective instrument towards my central purpose.... No doubt also it is not the correspondence itself, but the force that was increasing its pressure on the physical nature which was able to do all this, but a canalisation was needed and this served the purpose."

The way Sri Aurobindo communicated his spiritual force is unique. It works

on all the parts and planes of the individual. But the effect on that part which is specially open to him or to the Divine used to be remarkable. His force worked particularly on the mental plane, the thought plane. People, who never knew what poetry was, flowered into beautiful soul-poets. As a matter of fact a mathematician and logician started to write wonderful poetry. He left behind him a large volume of verse at once very subtle and powerful. A doctor, who did not have even a remote poetic symptom, turned out work both fine and profound.

Sri Aurobindo would descend to the level of his disciple and offer him a lifting hand to rise. He would patiently answer all his doubts and carry conviction to his rational mind. His touch was warm, encouraging and more motherly than that of a teacher. In spite of the great gulf between, he would come down to the lowest human level and treat his disciples with a friendly and brotherly affection. A disciple once accepted is never abandoned. If his nature is too stubborn to understand or too thick to permit light to enter, the greatest punishment is the Master's dinnning truths into his ear and denting the thick armour of his ignorance. If a disciple proves too dangerous to himself and to the rest, by being a source of utter pollution, the highest punishment was to send him out of the Ashram into the world till he again felt the irresistible urge to come back to the life of Yoga.

As Sri Krishna with his playful pranks stole the soft and butter-like hearts of all the gopis, entering each house, Sri Aurobindo also won the hearts of his disciples by appealing to each with his multifaceted personality.

The uniqueness of his teaching is an eternal freshness. It is for one time and for all time. It opens out to men new horizons of knowledge; knowledge that cannot be reached by the mind but can only be glimpsed. God-knowledge and self-knowledge and even real world-knowledge emanate from a higher level than the mind. The light which is their abode is other than the mental light. Sri Aurobindo strives to awaken and develop the inner light which has a kinship with that higher light. As the Upanishad says, "Know that knowledge by which all other knowledge is known." Sri Aurobindo the Guru is particular to light in our hearts the flame which gives that knowledge.

In the ignorant and young disciples, he catches his soul-being without disturbing his other beings and transmits the light and force which gradually transforms him even without his awareness. Every being, however low or high, has a small window in him towards the Divine which opens itself to the cool breeze of the Aurobindonian ideology and when he takes one step towards him, Sri Aurobindo comes down a hundred steps and embraces him without his knowing. Thereafter, how he works in him is a miracle. Not only is nothing expected from the disciple but he is guided and lifted as long as he keeps his inner door open to receive the Guru's influence, his force and his touch. Distance is no obstacle for this force to work. The influence is unobstructed and ineffable.

Such is Sri Aurobindo the Guru.

POEMS BEFORE AND AFTER 1973

OFFERING : XIII

POEMS WITHOUT WORDS—AUGUST 1980

I

(1)

If there are words to these poems
I do not know them,
These poems that I offer to You,
Reaching out to You, pouring out
To You with deepest meanings.
How, then, do I know they are ?

I feel them rising to You
From silence and in silence.
It is enough to feel them,
Not necessary that I understand.

These are my real poems, Mother,
These *Poems without Words* no poet ever writes
And yet knows they are his sweetest
And his only poems.

(2)

I offer You these poems, Mother.
They are not written nor spoken,
No words...not even thoughts...
Fabricated in silence, broken
Out of Universal Matrix like uncut gems;
Offered to You alone.

Even I cannot read them
For they are an unknown
Language, beyond the mind's knowing
And understanding. So they come forth
Unpolished and untouched. (Only earth gems need refinement.)
Through outer roughness You see the inner beauty, their true worth.

II

GENESIS

Coming not from mind nor growing
From the dark seed...thought's sowing,
These...self-germinated in Primal Matter,
Coalesced from what? Scattered
God flung by the Divine into space;
His thought, His music. In that place
Where the veils part, we become
His poem. We are all One Song.

ELIZABETH STILLER

TWO VOICES

“WHAT are you telling me?
Are you my spirit soon to be
who came to choose me secretly
because it has the inner key?”

“I’m coming from the distance
which is in your own self.
I want to be assistance
and take you from the shelf.”

“Where are you leading me?
I’m living quite in comfort here.
You don’t expect my company
soon to become a hero’s peer?”

“You silly being poor and dull,
have faith in my true word.
Is your world so safe and beautiful
that you can never be stirred?”

“My place is not so full of charm;
really I don’t much care.
I think, it’s more the ego’s harm
and the well-known pain to dare.”

“Let your intelligence be silent
and deeply dive in me below,
then I can lead you to the island
where God’s enchanting wonders grow.”

URSULA

TRIPLE PRAYER

I

O MOTHER of Love,
Love blooms on the tree of Life...
Roots, stem, branches, leaves and all
tremble with unearthly ecstasy...
Then...
All of a sudden...
Black bumble-bees assail
and exploit ruthlessly
the harvest of heaven!

Mother, if Thou wouldst bestow Love,
grant that the radiant flame
remains ever steady,
with its head high,
against all adversaries.
Life does not want the flickering
of will-o'-the-wisp.
It deludes the seeking eyes...

Flood my heart
with the crimson glow of Dawn,
the outpouring
from the soul of the secret Sun,
to purify the earthly dross.

2

O Mother of Power,
I flinch from the mad misuse of power...
Yet, let not my self-strength
be fettered into inaction!
Let well-being well out
at every step
to build the stronghold of Love
at the core of matter.

3

O Mother of Wisdom,
Let my knowledge leap
beyond the domain of knowing
and be poised at intuition...
and then...
Let the vision of the Supreme
be lit therein
to drive forever darkness afar....

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

IN SADHANA

IN Sadhana an instant occurs
When there is fulfilment, brought
By demands so intense—greed burns at that heat,
Aspiration so persistent—no space is left for envy's flight.

The ego seeks succour,
Time attempts rescue and finds itself
Lengthening like a ribbon, or shortening to a point
When it faces the faceless force of single intent.
It leaves confused, feeling soiled though untouched
Except by its own sight.

We dislike what we do not perceive.
How to fight what we do not see?
By conceding confusion, turning on one's self, or yielding?

Thoughts used to being loosed to dissect and destroy
Were once asked to gather feathers of knowledge
Floating hither and thither, and build a mighty weapon.
The ego searched for that now, deep within the mind.

Always seeking, failing to find, it reached the far cave.
Blank it was but for ghoulish thoughts, the wall beckoned,
The tired ego rested its head, then heard and felt
Whispers of silence, thick and bright, seep through the pores.

Pressure of the resting head opened crevices
In mind's wall that can open and close like a lattice.
Used at last by the inner soul, the ego breathed
The rushing winds of peace.

Stirred awake by heat of the higher calm
The ego awoke, turned and felt free
As it looked on its vast kingdom,
With joy and thrill, old hence welcome.

I await return of that instant;
I know, it always recurs.

DINKAR

THE RUSSIAN SYMBOLIST MOVEMENT

(Continued from the issue of May 1982)

THE principal Symbolist organ of expression, the review *Vesy*, started in 1904 under the unofficial editorship of Briusov, was primarily an illustrated literary review with an excellent art department (Bakst, Roerich, Sudeykin, Bruneleschi), and its importance was to literature what Diaghilev's *Mir Iskustva* was to art. Throughout the review's existence (1904-1909) it published the bulk of the Symbolists' works and extensive foreign contributions by Verhaeren, René Ghil, René and Jean de Gourmont, and René Arcos. In outward appearance the review was more *decadent* than *Mir Iskustva*. Its title page was adorned with peacocks, and it abounded in Beardsleyesque illustrations. An important feature of the review was its prose. It was predominantly involved and "ornamented," and in subject matter tended toward the esoteric and occult. The new review was to be "a window into eternity". Its aim was to establish once for all that all art is fundamentally symbolic; that the ideal of art is not beauty, but religion, and that literature in Russia was, and always had been, "an outward expression of a living religious confession".¹

A characteristic article by Bely, *The Apocalypse of Russian Poetry*,² defines the new, apocalyptic rôle of Russian poetry. The Russian Symbolists, says Bely, are prophets; their function is to proclaim the end of the world's history and to gather the "faithful" for the coming universal struggle against Antichrist. The article is full of occult references to "The Beast," "The Eternal Spouse," "The Great Sinner"—the sources of which are Soloviev's utterances on the forthcoming Mongol conquest of Russia and the death of European civilization. Ellis, another abstruse theoretician of Russian Symbolism, considers the new movement the highest and most perfect manifestation of art. Symbolism, he believes, foreshadows a new form of human consciousness and a higher stage in the evolution of mankind.³

The concept of a poet as a *Theurg*—a term devised by Soloviev to mean possessor of secret knowledge revealed to him alone—became prevalent in the years 1904-10. Literature as a whole was then identified with Symbolism, and the mission of the Russian Symbolists was to proclaim the death of Western civilization and the birth of a new era for mankind. *Vesy* became the principal purveyor of these views. But before the decade was over a reaction against the apocalyptic concept of Russian literature set in.

The greatest of the Symbolist poets was Alexander Blok (1880-1921). In his youth he was a disciple of Soloviev and one of the original members of Merezhkovski's Religious and Philosophical Society. His first collection of verse appeared in book form under the title *Verses about the Beautiful Lady* (1904). These poems record

¹ *Vesy*, II (1909), 63.

² *Ibid.*, IV (1905), 11-28

³ *Ibid.*, X (1909), 168, cf. also *ibid.*, VII, 55-74.

Blok's spiritual association with a person half real, half divine, who somewhat resembles Soloviev's Sophia and Dante's Beatrice. She is the object of Blok's ideal love. Like Soloviev's poems to Sophia, Blok's poems were drawn from mystic experiences and were based on dreams. The elusiveness and verbal melody of these lyrics are unsurpassed even by such masters of musical verse as Verlaine. Merezhkovski's group, particularly Bely, at once recognized in Blok a poet-prophet and awaited new mystic revelations. But the revelations never came.

Blok's ecstatic experiences which had produced these lyrics suddenly ceased. His next period was more earthly, midway between dream and reality. The Beautiful Lady became during this period the Stranger who appears in the famous poem by that name,¹ seen now in a cheap café and only through the vapors of wine. The poem is hard in outline, condensed, and rich in rhythm and associations. Blok's poems of the middle period are rich and varied in content. They express his cosmic boredom, his religious resignation; some are realistic *genre* pictures, others bitterly ironic denunciations of his earlier mysticism and ideal love.² All are marvels of concentration, balance, and vividness of presentation.

In an article published in 1910, and in a poem called *The Artist*, Blok explains his process of creation.³ The first stage is a presentiment, a dream, a state of poetic trance; the second stage is when reason enters and drives out the dream; all that is left of it is embodied in concrete form—the poem is finished. In Blok's poems, written from 1907 to 1916 and collected under the title of *Native Land*, Russia becomes the final object of his dreams. Here again is the Beautiful Lady, but now she is Russia. Through all these poems runs the prophecy of Russia's forthcoming suffering, purification, and ultimate glory. Again Blok is waiting for an Apocalypse, this time through blood and destruction.

The revolution of 1905 aroused in Blok a passing interest, but he was soon bored. Earthly politics were not his province. At the same time, his diary shows a tendency away from aesthetic and mystic idealism. He had tired of the empty verbosity of the Merezhkovski coterie. He wrote in 1907 to his mother:

It is strange to contemplate a small group of Russian intelligentsia which, in the course of a decade, has been repeatedly changing a multitude of world views and which has split itself into some fifty hostile groups, while a vast nation has preserved its one monotonous and stubborn conception of God.⁴

Despair is the central theme of Blok's poetry, and it was especially pronounced in the years preceding the revolution. He seems to have been constantly at war with himself, with his literary friends, and with the *bourgeois milieu*, of which he was a part

¹ *Neznakomka*.

² Cf the lyric play, *Balaganchik*.

³ *Apollon*, VIII (1910), 21 ff; the poem *Artist* was written in 1913.

⁴ *Pisma k rodnym* (Leningrad, 1927), letter dated November 27, 1907, p. 182.

and for whose spirit he had the utmost contempt. When the Bolshevik revolution came, Blok definitely welcomed it. "It seemed to him," his aunt records, "that the old world was really destroyed and that in its place there must appear something new and beautiful."¹ "To him the revolution meant the realization of his visions of apocalyptic glory for Russia. A reflection of this feeling is found in his greatest poem. *The Twelve*, written in January, 1918. The story is that of twelve red guardsmen patrolling in a blinding snowstorm the streets of revolutionary Petrograd shooting and bullying the *bourgeoisie*, quarreling among themselves and shooting a girl by mistake. As they march onward into the raging blizzard, a hungry mongrel shambling at their heels, Christ appears at their head, leading them on. The symbolism of the poem is not difficult to understand, though there is considerable disagreement as to its interpretation. Quite inevitably Christ must stand for the salvation and glory of Russia, which Blok has prophesied for so many years. The blinding snowstorm represents the spirit of the destruction of all that men had once loved (the girl who was shot, the mangy dog, the priest, etc.). Salvation would come through purification of blood and suffering. The poem is a magnificent epic of the revolution. The music of the dissonances deliberately introduced, the variety of rhythms, precise and vivid imagery, the songs of the streets—produce effects of extraordinary vastness and beauty.

In the same month as *The Twelve* Blok wrote his last poem, *The Scythians*, a powerful invective against the Western nations. After this poem he became silent. He seems to have lost faith in everything—in the Revolution, in Christ, in himself. He was tired and sick. Again, as in the case of the Beautiful Lady, his visions had betrayed him. Bolshevism was not the spiritual force that would renovate Russia, but was an extreme manifestation of Western materialism and complete mechanization of life. Gorki drew a terrible picture of the last days of Blok's life. His final utterances were a bitter denunciation of the intellect:

The thing is that we have become too clever to believe in God and not strong enough to believe in ourselves... The brain, the brain... It is not an organ to be relied upon—it is monstrously developed. It is swelling like a goitre.²

Blok died literally of suffocation on August 9, 1921. He was buried with all the honors due a great national poet.

The extreme expression of Symbolist mentality is probably to be found in Andrey Bely (1880-1934). His whole life is a kaleidoscope of rapidly changing literary, philosophical, and metaphysical ideals and concepts. No one theorized so much about Symbolism or helped so much to make of it a metaphysical *Weltanschauung*. Although more complex and brilliant than Blok, he lacked the latter's emotional depth, and is regarded by some critics as a sort of metaphysical mountebank of Russian Symbolism.

¹ M. A. Beketova, *Aleksandr Blok* (Petersburg, 1922), p. 256.

² Quoted by C.M. Bowra, "The Position of Alexander Blok," *Criterion*, XI (1932), 436-437

Like Blok, Bely makes his appearance in literature as an adept of Merezhkovski's group of mystics. He is anxiously awaiting with them the revelations of Sophia, the Feminine Hypostasis, which would transform the whole of life. Soloviev, Nietzsche, and later Steiner's Anthroposophy were Bely's principal influences throughout his life. Black magic, satanism and spiritism—everything esoteric and occult seems to have held irresistible fascinations for him, especially in the early years of his literary career. But all these interests Bely takes in the spirit of a spoiled child receiving new toys; he plays with them for a while, then discards them.

Bely's first, typically *fin de siècle* verse is indistinguishable from that of his contemporaries; but soon, under the influence of Soloviev's teachings, he embraced Symbolism as a general philosophy of life. His *Symphonies* (1902-1908), written in rhythmic prose, represent direct attempts to make literature approach to the condition of music. They have several meanings and are written in a musically organized prose, with counterpoint and an elaborate system of movements, themes, and *leit-motifs*. Here, in addition to Poe and Verlaine, one discovers Maeterlinck, with his paraphernalia of swans, lotus, reeds, and canoes, Merezhkovski's prophecies about the end of the world, and above all Bely's own mystic exuberance and tomfoolery. The subject of the *Symphonies*, so far as can be discerned, is the great apocalyptic struggle between the good and the evil forces of the universe. The public and critics received the *Symphonies* with indignation and scorn, and for a time Bely replaced Briusov as the stock target for assaults on the new school.

In 1904 Bely revolted against Merezhkovski's Messianism, and in a series of poems ridiculed the latter's prophecies. All his former hopes and aspirations now ended in an insane asylum, as expressed, for example, in his poem, *Madman* (1904). In the following year, however, Bely, like so many other Symbolists, was carried away by the revolutionary movement, and for a while tried to reconcile it with Soloviev's mysticism. Failing in this, he temporarily became more sober and turned for inspiration to Russia. His poems, written between 1905-1908, are similar to those written during the same period by Blok. They are excellent *genre* poems dealing with hoboes, peasants, and various aspects of rustic life. In these Bely elaborates new rich rhymes, alliterations, assonances, and experiments with a variety of foreign and native verse forms. Some poems evince a sharp sense of humor, quite unusual in most Symbolists' poetry. But this period did not last very long. Beginning with the poem, *Despair* (1908),¹ Bely lost his faith in Russia and the Russian people. Russia now is "all in a drunken mist." But his pessimism and despair have little in common with the tragic intensity of Blok. In Bely, even his most earnest poems are chiefly magnificent acrobatics in word and sound play. Simultaneously with his poetry, Bely wrote and published, in *Vesy* and other contemporary reviews, his brilliant but fantastic critiques, interpreting Symbolism, and expounding his metaphysical views.²

¹ *Dovolno ne zhdi, ne nadeisia* .

² Cf. for example, "Simvolizm kak miroponimanie," *Mir Iskustva*, IV (1904), 173-196, "O. Teurgii," *Novy Put*, IX (1903), 100-123, "Simvolizm," *Vesy*, XII (1908), 36-41.

In 1909 Bely began to write a series of Symbolist novels, which are perhaps his greatest contributions to Russian literature. One of these novels, *St. Petersburg* (1913), can be regarded as typical of his ideology and prose style. *St. Petersburg* was written in the period when he was under the spell of Steiner's Anthroposophy—an occult science built on the assumption of exact parallelism between microcosm and macrocosm. This novel, like all the rest of Bely's prose, has three different meanings: a philosophical-symbolical meaning, derived from a mixture of Soloviev's teachings and Steiner's Anthroposophy; a realistic, satirical meaning; and an obvious narrative one. Without a knowledge of Steiner the esoteric meaning escapes one. Nor is it essential, for the story itself is most absorbing. It centers about the bureaucrat, Ableukhov, and his revolutionary son. A terrorist revolutionary gives the son a bomb containing a clock-mechanism which is to explode within twenty-four hours and destroy his father. The suspense is excellently maintained by a detailed account of the twenty-four hours. In a general way, the son and the father are symbols of cosmic ideas. They represent the apocalyptic struggle of the East and the West, of Christ and Antichrist. Russia is the center of this vast, cosmic struggle, the outcome of which, Bely suggests, is as yet unknown, but will be revealed, "perhaps tomorrow, perhaps in five thousand years."

In *St. Petersburg*, as in his other prose works, Bely successfully combines penetrating realistic descriptions with his mystical symbolism. His strikingly original prose style has been variously termed "free-impressionistic" or "ornamented," and its best counterpart in the West is the style of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. The essential thing in Bely's style is its disjointed, rhythmic quality, its focussing of attention on sounds and association of words. At his best, as for example in the first part of *St. Petersburg*, he produces suggestive, vivid, and harmonious effects; at his worst, he degenerates into meaningless word-play, or worse still, hysteria. Nevertheless, ornamentation has had a vast effect on modern Russian prose style, and it is chiefly to Bely and several other Symbolists that the credit belongs for rendering it more varied and flexible.

Like Blok, Bely welcomed the Bolshevik revolution. In a series of poems, especially in the well-known and very mediocre poem, *Christ is Risen* (1918), he identified Bolshevism with Christianity, more completely even than did Blok in *The Twelve*. Russia was now "the Messiah of the days to come." Purified through suffering, she was to discard obsolete Western civilization and give to the world a new Logos. During 1918-20, the terrible years of revolutionary slaughter and devastation, Bely became the center of the Messianic renaissance of Russia. He founded the *Volfila* (Free Philosophical Association) for the discussion of mystical metaphysics, he edited mystical miscellanies, lectured, taught poetry to the proletarian poets, and, with Gorki, became the most influential literary figure of the day. At the same time he began to reinterpret history in order to show that all civilizations had tended toward collectivism.¹ In 1933, a year before his death, Bely published a volume of memoirs and re-

¹ Cf. Bely's introduction to the first issue of review *Epopeia*, 1922

collections of the Symbolist group of 1900-1905.¹ In this volume he depicted his former friends and colleagues as degenerates, and apparently tried to rehabilitate himself in the eyes of the Bolsheviks. In a brief foreword to this book, Kamenev has pointed out that the author, in spite of the many years of his association with the Communists, remains, as the memoirs clearly show, the most typical representative of the literary group he described—that group which, at the beginning of the century, anxiously awaited the fulfilment of Merezhkovski's prophecies concerning the end of the world.

The last major figure of Russian Symbolism to be discussed here, Vyacheslav Ivanov, poet-scholar, mystic and philosopher, exemplified the most harmonious blending of Western culture with Slavophile traditions. In the Western sense, Briusov and Ivanov were the most learned among the Symbolists. Unlike Briusov, Ivanov combined his great scholarship, particularly in the mystic religions of Greece, with a Christian mysticism, derived partly from Soloviev. The essential feature of his thought was a synthesis of Dionysus and Christ.

At the beginning of the century Ivanov's oddly archaic and rugged verse attracted the attention of the Symbolists. He joined their circles and was for a time under the influence of the Merezhkovskis. In 1905 he became a co-founder of an ephemeral revolutionary philosophy, known as Mystical Anarchism, which took as its motto Ivan Karamazov's words: "I accept God, but I do not accept His world." The creed was symptomatic of the intellectual hysteria of the time. It failed to attract a sufficient following and gradually disintegrated, but Ivanov in the meantime became the leader of the St. Petersburg Symbolists, while Briusov was their leader in Moscow.

From 1905 to 1911 Ivanov's apartment in St. Petersburg, known as "The Tower," became the central gathering place of the most advanced intellectuals of the day. New poets were read and criticized there, and metaphysical and mystical conversations lasted until early morning. All those who were privileged to attend their midnight gatherings describe them in their memoirs and letters as the outstanding intellectual experiences of their lives. The learning, poetic gift, and personal charm of the host made him the undisputed leader among the younger generation of Symbolists.²

The period of "The Tower" coincided with Ivanov's best poetry, contained in the collection *Cor Ardens*. His verse, very conscious and ornate, but rich in cadence and imagery, has been described as "Byzantine" and "Alexandrian." One of its features is Ivanov's fondness for substantives and passive verb forms, which, together with his elaborate imagery, often produced effects of magnificence and splendor. He greatly enriched the language through his use of archaisms, Greek idioms, and elaboration of new words. Ivanov's poetry is predominantly metaphysical and mystical. In conformity with his belief in a new mythological age, art in general (poetry in particular) was for him an expression of communal religious experience, and was

¹ *Nachalo veka* (Moscow, 1933).

² Cf. F. Stepun, "Vyacheslav Ivanov," *Sovremennaya Zapiski*, LXII (1936), 229-246

to be judged by religious and mystical standards. His mysticism is thus non-individualistic like that of other contemporary Symbolists, but is wedded to a non-political group-sense.

The decline of Symbolism as a literary school brought an end to Ivanov's intellectual leadership. He continued, however, to exercise an influence on isolated Symbolist poets. Unlike Blok and Bely, Ivanov did not openly welcome the Bolshevik revolution. He remained in Russia, however, taught Greek to young Communist Tatars, and continued to write poetry and prose. A recent collection of his poems, *Roman Sonnets*, and his published letter to Charles du Bos do not evidence an appreciable change in his psychology and outlook.¹ He may have repudiated "bourgeois culture," but he is still "with Dionysus and Christ." Ivanov is now seventy-two years old, and, so far as one knows, has maintained a friendly relationship with the Bolshevik leaders.

An atmosphere of religious enthusiasm akin to that of early Christianity pervaded Russian literature during the first decade of the century. The lives and works of Blok, Bely, and Ivanov show clearly the evolution of Russian Symbolism from Western to native sources of inspiration. Symbolism, as interpreted and practiced by the second generation of Russian Symbolists, was no longer merely a method of creation, but a metaphysical world-view, representing the religious searchings and intuitions of the entire Russian people. The nihilism of the nineties, nourished chiefly by Western poets and philosophers, was replaced in the nineteen hundreds by a burning faith in a special mission preordained for Russia, and by an acute anxiety for her destiny. It was a faith inspired in part by national folklore and the early history of the country, partly by the works and personalities of Dostoevski and Soloviev.

The years 1904-10 were years of triumphant Symbolism. The Symbolists' ideals were at last accepted by the critics and public alike, and a host of new poets had arisen, who all started their careers as pupils of the older Symbolists. From the beginning of the century to the present day most of the best Russian prose and poetry, both Soviet and *émigré*, derives more or less directly from the Symbolist group. Symbolism had renovated the Russian language. Gone were the characteristic virtues of Pushkin's eighteenth-century style—precision, clarity, and the strictly logical use of words. The primary meaning of words was now largely subordinated to sound, and words acquired a new range of emotional values. A variety of new rhythms, rhyme-schemes, and verse forms became a permanent part of Russian prosody. Prose, too, underwent profound modifications. Through the use of popular colloquial language by Sologub, Bely, and other Symbolists, prose became immeasurably more flexible, less conventionally "literary," more rhythmic, and richer in emotional content. New effects were achieved in all branches of literature through a conscious blending of mystic idealism with ironic realism, of the real with the imaginary, of the grand with the prosaic, the best examples of which are found in the works of Blok, Bely, Sologub, or Remizov, who is perhaps the most original pupil of the Symbolist

¹ Viacheslav Ivanov, "Rismkie Sonety," *Sovremenniya Zapiski*, LXII (1936), 178-183.

School. In addition to raising the standards of artistic workmanship, the Symbolists elevated the intellectual level of the society in which they lived to heights hitherto unknown to Russia. New cultural vistas were opened. In their thirst for universal knowledge, Bruisov, Ivanov, Merezhkovski and religious philosophers, like Shestov and Berdyaev, exemplified the very spirit of the Italian Renaissance. No group of contemporary writers in Western Europe could be found to compare with the Russian Symbolists in learning and erudition of the most diversified kind. The Russian intelligentsia, through the Symbolists, became more European and at the same time more national.

Symbolism was not, of course, the only trend in Russian literature prior to the revolution. There were other literary groups, such as the Gorki-Andreev school of prose writers, the so-called civic poets, and the political writers of the Marxist school. But the aesthetes, mystics, and religious philosophers comprising the Symbolist group alone accomplished the remarkable renaissance in Russian art and literature.

The gradual disintegration of the Symbolist School begins with the discontinuance in 1909 of the review, *Vesy*. According to its editors, it was the triumph of their ideals that was the principal reason for the suspension of the review; its mission had been accomplished.¹ Actually, however, ideological differences between its editors and a growing reaction of the intelligentsia against the mystical preoccupations of the Symbolists was the real cause for *Vesy's* suspension. New rival schools, such as the Futurists and the Imagists, began to spring up. They attacked the Symbolists' idea of the mystical essence of poetry and refused to regard life as a forest of symbols. "We want to admire a rose," said the Imagists, "because it is beautiful, not because it is a symbol of mystical purity." The concept of the poet as seer and prophet was opposed now by the concept of him as an artisan and master of his craft.

Symbolism as an organized and self-conscious movement died in Russia shortly before the Communist revolution. It is one of the paradoxes of history that the Russian Symbolists, representing a society "refined beyond the point of civilization," rebelled against their own excessive culture and welcomed the Revolution. Some, like Blok and Bely, hoped that the Bolshevik revolution would destroy altogether the old *bourgeois* world and in its place would give rise to a new spiritual culture, more elemental and freer from the fetters of Western civilization. From the beginning of the century the Symbolists never ceased to prophesy the coming of a great catastrophe, which, after a period of wars and great suffering, would ultimately lead to a new, spiritually higher era for mankind. When the Bolshevik revolution came, the Symbolists quite inevitably saw in it the fulfilment of their prophecies. Aside from Balmont and the Merezhkovskis, all the principal Symbolists refused to leave Russia, although, naturally, they had nothing whatever in common with the aims and ideals of communism. The worst years of the civil war, terror, and destitution, were the period of Russia's purification through suffering, as symbolized in Blok's *The Twelve*, and pro-

¹ Cf. Viacheslav Ivanov, "Zavety Simvolizma," *Apollon*, VIII (1910), 5-20 and *Vesy*, XII (1909), 183-191.

phesied two decades before by Soloviev—foreshadowed even earlier by Dostoevski. But as time went on, it became apparent that spiritual revival had not come. The realization that their prophecies were apparently false had different effects on each of the major Symbolists. Blok denounced the revolution; Sologub died prematurely, a broken man; Briusov entered the Communist party; Bely and Ivanov, while doing lip service to Marx and Lenin, continued, for a time at least, to live in vague hopes of the millennium. Not one of the Symbolists became a true Marxist—not even Briusov. Most of them ceased to write or produced only inferior work. Although, technically, Symbolism is still a live influence in Russian contemporary literature, its metaphysics is long since gone.

(Concluded)

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A TRAVELOGUE

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ROME is a place where the mind can roam the most. In fact the tourist lives there in a perpetual phantasmagoria. His thought travels back and forth through the centuries and the shadow-play thus produced becomes more real than the actual world and present-day happenings. It is absolutely imperative, if you really want to enjoy your stay in Rome, to read up a few pages of history. Then everything becomes warm and alive with the great deeds of the great and a tale of magnificently active geniuses and brilliant men. Otherwise all might appear a sorry canvas of broken-down monuments and unholy spectres. I have actually seen people trying to avoid a place that appeared to them rather spooky.

Every Metropolitan city in Europe has an atmosphere completely different from those of the rest. Each one has something special to give. To discover what this "something special" is, tourists and sightseers would do well to gather some facts and figures about the place they are approaching. This also demands a certain orientation in our outlook and perception, and it should reflect even in the clothes we wear. In London one should wear one's smartest if not one's best dresses, for wherever you go everything is neat and clean and all is ship-shape. It is a vast city, so when you have seen a place you had set out to see, you have to board a bus or take a taxi or travel by underground rail to reach your next destination. There is no scope for much walking. So good clothes and a pair of gloves to protect your hands from the dust on the hand-railings and hand-grips are the requirements.

In Rome it is diametrically opposite. All you need here is a pair of comfortable slacks, a pair of good strong shoes and a sturdy parasol. For in Rome you have to climb up and climb down, walk and trek all the time. Rome moves with dignity but with a heavy gait. Rome is a picturesque place and much of its beauteousness is enhanced by its being built on and around hills. Italy has an unlimited supply of marble of various kinds. Not just white but off-white, pink, black, striped; then there is the Brescian marble that can never be mellowed by time. Apart from these I have mentioned there are, it seems, many more varieties. Throughout the centuries a tribe of skilled artisans, naturally proud of their hereditary occupation, has made Rome an international show-piece of sculptures. The gardens and the sculptures blend beautifully. The lay-out of the Borghese Gardens and other public gardens is exactly in tune with the atmosphere of Rome. The Pincian Hill is the place for people who love to stroll among flower-beds and wooded vistas and inhale the sweetened air, or feel the Ponentino blowing gently from the West bringing the smell of the sea. Standing on any one of these seven hills one can enjoy the glory of the setting sun while the Eternal City all ablaze spreads out in front as far as the eyes can go. The church-bells

ringing at dusk make one thoughtful and introspective.

On the southern slopes of the Pincian Hill are the famous Spanish Steps. The Steps have really nothing to do with Spain. They lead to a French church known as Trinita Dei Monte and the Académie Nationale de France. And the Steps were financed by a French diplomat. They are not ordinary even steps one associates with staircases. Some of them are broad, some narrow, some close together, some far apart. These are symmetrically arranged to form a strange but beautiful tableau. They were designed by Alessandro Specchi, the greatest sculptor of his day. At the bottom of the Steps is a fountain that reminds one of a boat and is called La Barcaccia (boat). This fountain was designed by Specchi's father who got his inspiration watching a flood on the river Tiber. Incidentally the Romans call their river Tibéré and not Tiber as the outside world does.

Steps of this kind are very important in Rome. Wherever the Romans found climbing difficult, they hit upon the idea of constructing steps, and since they were so important some of the greatest Italian designers and sculptors have taken a hand at making them. At the bottom of the Spanish Steps is a house where the English poet Keats lived and died. His rooms are the Mecca for his admirers even now.

I don't know if we saw all the hills; at least we saw the most famous, the one that had the greatest number of stories associated with it. From one side of the Forum that was used by the Romans for fourteen centuries rises the Capitoline Hill. On the other side is the Via Triumphalis. It was from here that the Roman Legions had gone out again and again to subdue the world, later the religious legion of Christ to make spiritual conquests. Coming back from great victories the Caesars dressed like Jupiter climbed the Capitoline Hill for a Thanksgiving Service in the Temple of Jupiter that stood on top of the Hill. Today the Temple is no longer there, in its place stands the Palazzo Conservatori which is used as the Town Hall and some sort of Municipal office. The two wings of the Palazzo house a museum that can compare with the very best in Europe. The Palazzo does not face the Forum. So to see the museum we had to approach the Hill from Piazza del Campidoglio. If you are interested to know how each Caesar looked, this museum is the best place. The collection is very remarkable. Almost all the busts show a clean-shaven face. Then came into fashion what was known as the *scented beards*. So we see the bearded face of Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, Antoninus Pius, etc. Alexander the Great was the first king in Greco-Roman history who regularly shaved. So the Caesars followed him. The wall paintings of the other exhibits are exquisite. In the middle of the courtyard is the equestrian statue of Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Once it was covered with gold. The gold is gone yet it is still warm and alive as if the Emperor has just put himself astride his charger. Here was the first attempt in Rome at an equestrian statue. The second one is at the entrance to the Vatican from St. Peter's. That one is of Emperor Constantine on a splendid prancing horse looking towards Constantinople. Both were done by Bernini, the magnificent Bernini who did St. Peter's without the dome. The dome was done by Michael Angelo.

As we approached the Capitoline Hill from Piazza del Campidoglio our attention was attracted by two statues on top of the steps, one of Castor and the other naturally of Pollux. The steps were of exquisite white marble shining brilliantly, having been cleansed with saw-dust. They were soft and graceful as a new creation by Dior. We thought it was a sacrilege to tread on these steps with shoes on and felt like asking for cloth-covers as they do in the Library at Galen. On enquiry we learnt that the steps were designed and executed by one of the greatest sculptor-painters of the Renaissance period: no less a person than Michael Angelo. We were speechless for a few second.

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

After Midnight. By *Subhas Saha*. Published by Prayer Books, 43/B, Nandaram Sen St., Calcutta - 700 005. Hard bound. 1981. Pages: 34. Price: Rs. 25/-

EVEN before the publication of his first collection of poems, *The Unseen Bird*, in 1971, Subhas Saha was being widely and justly praised as a poet of unusual gifts. The encouragement given by critics and readers made him write 'a piece every morning' and by 1976 he had to his credit six collections of poems. But he made his readers wait for another five years to read his next collection. It was indeed a long wait. His absence made the heart of poetry-lovers grow fonder. And this seventh collection will not disappoint them. It will only add to their admiration for him—all because he keeps in his mind an audience when he writes.

The new volume consisting of 16 short poems records the primary experiences—of loneliness and desire, of suffering and bereavement. Since most of the poems are centred upon the pronoun 'I', Subhas Saha's writings appear to derive from the characteristic of self-concern. As is the case with most poets, he wants to lie down

In the centre of silence
deeply established
within this space.

Failure to him is a flower which he inhales with a mad intoxication and he does it incessantly till he becomes "its essence in the end". Modelling one of his poems on the great bard of Avon, Subhas Saha writes the seven stages of love. 'Loving is like flowering,' says the poet and calls 'living' itself 'the silken agony'.

Can't we drink the sparkles of the moon
in the dark-drowned arbour
and be called lovers, and not sinners?

sighs the poet-lover in 'The Existential Questions of a Lover'. Happy with his lady he writes in his 'Routes of Love':

The cool breeze of summer
made us grow tendril on tendril
to stick fast to each other
in the seeping beauty of the green.

But the cruel claws of fate had their hold on the lovers. He moans:

Some volcano threw us out from each other
and wedged rain after rain between our selves.

The poet in his 'Beyond the Space' grieves over his sweetheart who lives only in a photograph and that too fading in an old album. He wishes that she may be 'like an ocean' and he be drowned 'in her immense inside' or 'float like the ocean with her'. And his ambition is:

Let us circle and complete
the shape of the globe.

In 'The Last Moment', the poet speaks about the death of his father and in the poem that follows, 'Death-Birth', he feels happy on seeing his dead father live in his son. He cries jubilantly:

the last cry of my father
the first cry of my son.

Like T. S. Eliot, Subhas Saha shows here the cycle of life and we remember the famous lines from 'East Coker':

In my beginning is my end,
In my end is my beginning.

The images Subhas Saha uses are unstrained. He is at his best when he writes:

Let us begin singing
since the light has filled
the bird's nest
and the egg is breaking
and
the burning stone of light
sinks in the bosom of water.

Subhas Saha's poetry is not exactly lyrical. But that does not in any way obstruct our entering his realm. Pleasure indeed is the word to end on. *After Midnight* is certainly one of Subhas Saha's most varied and rewarding books and it deserves the attention of a wide audience although his best book is yet to come.

P. RAJA