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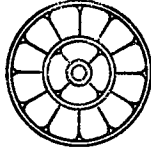
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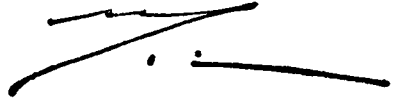


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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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SRI AUROBINDO ON HIS PHILOSOPHY AND WORLD-VISION

THERE is very little argument in my philosophy—the elaborate metaphysical reasoning full of abstract words with which the metaphysician tries to establish his conclusions is not there. What is there is a harmonising of the different parts of a many-sided knowledge so that all unites logically together. But it is not by force of logical argument that it is done, but by a clear vision of the relations and sequences of that knowledge.

4. II. 1936

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Experience and formulation of experience I consider as the true aim of philosophy. The rest is merely intellectual work and may be interesting but nothing more.

*

There is possible a realistic as well as an illusionist Adwaita. The philosophy of *The Life Divine* is such a realistic Adwaita. The world is a manifestation of the Real and therefore is itself real. The reality is the infinite and eternal Divine, infinite and eternal Being, Consciousness-Force and Bliss. This Divine by his power has created the world or rather manifested it in his own infinite Being. But here in the material world or at its basis he has hidden himself in what seems to be his opposites, Non-Being, Inconscience and Insentience. This is what we nowadays call the Inconscient which seems to have created the material universe by its inconscient Energy; but this is only an appearance, for we find in the end that all the dispositions of the world can only have been arranged by the workings of a supreme secret intelligence. The Being which is hidden in what seems to be an inconscient void emerges in the world first in Matter, then in Life, then in Mind and finally as the Spirit. The apparently inconscient Energy which creates is in fact the Consciousness-Force of the Divine and its aspect of consciousness, secret in Matter, begins to emerge in Life, finds something more of itself in Mind and finds its true self in a spiritual consciousness and finally a Supramental consciousness through which we become aware of the Reality, enter into it and unite ourselves with it. This is what we call evolution which is an evolution of consciousness and an evolution of the Spirit in things and only outwardly an evolution of species. Thus also the delight of existence emerges from the original insentience first in the contrary forms of pleasure and pain and then has to find itself in the bliss of the Spirit or as it is called in the Upanishads, the bliss of the Brahman. That is the central idea in the explanation of the universe put forward in *The Life Divine*.

*

In my explanation of the universe I have put forward this cardinal fact of a spiritual evolution as the meaning of our existence here. It is a series of ascents, from the physical being and consciousness to the vital, the being dominated by the life-self, thence to the mental being realised in the fully developed man and thence into the perfect consciousness which is beyond the mental, into the Supramental consciousness and the Supramental being, the Truth-Consciousness which is the integral consciousness of the spiritual being. Mind cannot be our last conscious expression because mind is fundamentally an ignorance seeking for knowledge; it is only the Supramental Truth-Consciousness that can bring us the true and whole Self-Knowledge and world-Knowledge; it is through that only that we can get to our true being and the fulfilment of our spiritual evolution.

SRI AUROBINDO ON BHARAT-MATA

FROM BHAVAN'S JOURNAL, JULY 22, 1962

Dr. K. M. Munshi, Ex-Governor of Uttara Pradesh, who was a student of Sri Aurobindo at Baroda College, once asked him how Nationalism could be developed. Sri Aurobindo pointed to a wall-map of India and said something to this effect—

“Look at that map. Learn to find in it the portrait of Bharat-Mata. The cities, mountains, rivers and forests are the materials which go to make up Her body. The people inhabiting the country are the cells which go to make up Her living tissues. Our literature is Her memory and speech. The spirit of our culture is Her Soul. The happiness and freedom of Her children is Her salvation. Behold Bharat as a living Mother, meditate upon Her and worship Her in the nine-fold way of Bhakti.”

THE UNIFICATION OF MANKIND

SRI AUROBINDO'S VISION OF INTERNATIONALISM AND INDIA'S ROLE IN IT

THE unification of mankind is under way, though only in an imperfect initiative, organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum is there and, if the experience of history can be taken as a guide, it must inevitably increase until it conquers. Here too India has begun to play a prominent part and, if she can develop that larger statesmanship which is not limited by the present facts and immediate possibilities but looks into the future and brings it nearer, her presence may make all the difference between a slow and timid and a bold and swift development. A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For in any case the unification is a necessity in the course of Nature, an inevitable movement and its achievement can be safely foretold. Its necessity for the nations also is clear, for without it the freedom of the small peoples can never be safe hereafter and even large and powerful nations cannot really be secure. India, if she remains divided, will not herself be sure of her safety. It is therefore to the interest of all that union should take place. Only human imbecility and stupid selfishness could prevent it. Against that, it has been said, even the gods strive in vain; but it cannot stand for ever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine Will. Nationalism will then have fulfilled itself; an international spirit and outlook must grow up and international forms and institutions; even it may be such developments as dual or multilateral citizenship and a voluntary fusion of cultures may appear in the process of the change and the spirit of nationalism losing its militancy may find these things perfectly compatible with the integrity of its own outlook. A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race.

(From Sri Aurobindo's Message on Independence Day, August 15, 1947)

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON AUGUST 4, 1954

This talk is based upon Chapter 5
of *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

Sweet Mother, what is the difference between a servant and a worker?

I DON'T think there is much difference; it is almost the same thing. Perhaps the attitude is not quite the same, but there is not much of a difference. In "servant" there seems to be something more: it is the joy of serving. The worker—he has only the joy of the work. But the work that is done as a service brings still greater joy.

What does "self-love" mean?

I think self-love is a pleasant word for vanity. Self-love means that one loves oneself more than anything else; and what he implies by this, you see, are exactly those reactions of a vanity which is vexed when one is not appreciated at one's true worth, when one does not receive the praise he thinks he deserves, or the reward he believes he has earned, and when one is not complimented for everything he does. Indeed, all these movements come from dissatisfaction, because one doesn't receive what he hoped to, what he thought he deserved to receive!

Sweet Mother, what is a "dynamic identification"?

It is the opposite of a passive or inert identification. It is an identification that is full of energy, will, action, enthusiasm; whereas one can be identified also in a kind of torpor.

You have written in Words of Long Ago that we justify all our weaknesses when we lack self-confidence. Why do we do this?

Um! So! We justify all our weaknesses? It is not a positive want of self-confidence; it is a lack of confidence in what the divine Grace can do for us. To justify one's weaknesses is a kind of laziness and inertia.

Well, when one doesn't want to make an effort to correct oneself, one says, "Oh, it is impossible, I can't do it, I don't have the strength, I am not made of that stuff, I don't have the necessary qualities, I could never do it." It is absolute laziness, it is in order to avoid the required effort. When you are asked to make progress: "Oh, it is beyond my capacity, I am a poor creature, I can do nothing!" That's all.

It is almost ill-will. It is extreme laziness, a refusal to make any effort. One accepts all one's defects and incapacities in order not to have to make the necessary effort to overcome them. One says, "I am like that, I can't be otherwise!" It is a refusal to let the divine Grace work in you. It is a justification of your own ill-will.

Has someone there a question or isn't there any?

Sweet Mother, here Sri Aurobindo writes: "You will know and see and feel that you are a person and power formed by her out of herself, put out from her for the play...." What play?

The universe is called the play of the Divine!

Why?

Why? That's a way of speaking! You feel that it is not an amusing game? There are many who don't (*laughter*), who find that the play is not amusing. But still, it's a way of speaking.... One speaks of—without thinking that it is joyful—one speaks of "the play of forces"; it is the movement, the interaction. All activities are the play of forces. So one can take it in that sense. But, you see, it means that the divine Force, the divine Consciousness, has exteriorised itself to create the universe and all the play of forces in the universe. That's what it means, nothing else. I don't mean necessarily playing in the Playground! It can mean many other things!

(*Turning to the other children to induce them to ask questions*) Nothing? You don't have anything either?

What is the meaning of "keep yourself free from all taint of the perversions of the ego"?

Perversions of the ego?

(*After a silence*) Perversion is something that goes astray from the divine truth and purity. The moment you start living in ignorance and falsehood, you live in perversion; and the whole world is made of ignorance and falsehood at present. So this means that if you remain in the ordinary consciousness, you are necessarily in the perversion of the ego.

Mother, here it is said: "Even if the idea of the separate worker is strong in you and you feel that it is you who do the act, yet it must be done for her." For example, our study of sports—we must think that it is for the Divine?

But surely...

How?

It is not even very difficult. You can first do it as a preparation so as to become capable of receiving the divine forces, and then, as a service, so that you may help in constructing the whole organisation of the Ashram. You can do it not with any personal gain in view, but with the intention of making yourselves ready to accomplish the divine work! This seems to me even quite indispensable if you want to profit fully from the situation. If you keep the ordinary point of view, well, you will always find yourselves in conditions which are not quite satisfactory, and incapable of receiving all the forces you can receive.

Mother, if for instance in the long jump one makes an effort to jump a greater and greater distance, how does one do the divine work?

Eh? Excuse me, it is not for the pleasure of doing the long jump, it is to make your body more perfect in its functioning, and, therefore, a more suitable instrument for receiving the divine forces and manifesting them.

Why, everything, everything one does in this place must be done in this spirit, otherwise you do not even profit by the opportunity given to you, the circumstances given to you. I explained to you the other day, didn't I? that the Consciousness is here, penetrating all things and trying to manifest in all movements. But if you, on your side, tell yourself that the effort you are making, the progress you are making, you make in order to become more capable of receiving this Consciousness and of manifesting it, the work will naturally be much better and much quicker. And this seems to me even quite elementary, to tell you the truth; I am surprised that it could be otherwise! Because your presence in an Ashram organised as it is organised would have no meaning if it were not that! Of what use would it be? There are any number of universities, schools in the world which are very well organised!

But if you are here, it is for a *special reason*! It is because here there is a possibility of absorbing consciousness and progress which is not found elsewhere. And if you don't prepare yourselves to receive this, well, you will lose the chance that's given to you!

Why, I have never spoken of this before, because it seemed so obvious to me that it was not at all necessary to say it.

Like that, Mother, one knows one must do all that! But when one does it, then the intention is different!

No, but... (*Silence*) what do you think, in a general way? It is by some kind of chance or luck—or just because your parents are here—that by chance you happen to be here, or what? I don't know! (*Laughing*) That you could as well be here as anywhere else, or what?

You are all old enough to have thought a little, and reflected a little. You have never asked yourselves, "Why am I here?" Have you asked yourselves this? Or

is it something which... I indeed thought that you ought to take it as something quite... that it was understood, quite natural! So, I never spoke to you about it. Why, I would be interested in knowing... (*To a child*) Have you thought of this, you there?

I told you, Sweet Mother, the other day!

That's right, but you can repeat it (*To another child*) And you? Have you thought about it? Or do you take it like that... because papa and mamma are here, so I am here? (*Laughter*) (*To another*) And you?

When you gave us "To the Children of the Ashram"—after that I understood.

Ah, you understood! Not before that?

I did not think about it before.

But how old are you all, on an average, here? Fifteen or sixteen? Seventeen? Twenty? No? It is not like that? The Red Group is between fifteen and twenty, isn't it? Are there some here who are younger?

No!

But one begins to think at thirteen. One begins to think, to ask oneself questions, one even wonders, "What is life, and why do we live?" And still more when one finds oneself in a place like this, which is not quite an ordinary place: "Why am I here?" and "What is the use of being here?" and "What is the reason for being here?" Eh?—You do not think? You do not think? I know two or three of you who think about it because you have told me. But (*laughing*) the others? You have never asked yourselves these questions, no?... Nobody is saying a word! (*Laughter*)

(*To a child*) So you, you have never thought about it? You have. (*Nobody replies.*) Ah! They don't want to say anything. All right, let's not talk any more about it then. (*Laughter*)

That's all? Is that enough?

Mother, what's interesting is this: What is there in us that has made us come here?

Ah, that is interesting! What is the reason of your being here? Well, it's for each one to find it. Have you found it, you? No, not yet? Why, that's another very interesting question!

If you... (*Silence*) If you asked yourselves this, you would be obliged to seek the

answer somewhere, within—because it is *within* you, the answer. “What is there in us that has made us come here?” The answer is within. There is nothing outside. And if you go deep enough, you will find a very clear answer... (*Silence*) and an interesting answer. If you go deep enough, into a sufficiently complete silence from all outer things, you will find within you that flame about which I often speak, and in this flame you will see *your destiny*. You will see the aspiration of centuries which has been concentrated gradually, to lead you through countless births *to the great day of realisation*—that preparation which has been made through thousands of years, and is reaching its culmination.

And as you will have gone very deep to find this, all your incapacities, all your weaknesses, everything in you that denies and does not understand, all that—you will feel that it is not yourself, it is just like a garment which serves in some way and which you have put on for the time being. But you will understand that in order to be truly capable of profiting fully by the opportunity to do what you wanted to do, what you have aspired to do for such a long time, you must gradually bring the light, the consciousness, the truth into all these obscure elements of the external garment, so that you may be able to understand integrally *why you are here!* And not only that you may understand it, but that you may be able to do it. For centuries this has been prepared in you, not in this... (*Mother punches the skin of her forearm*) this is quite recent, isn't it?... but in your true self. And *for centuries* it has been awaiting *this opportunity*.

And then you enter *immediately* into the marvellous. You see to what an extent it is extraordinary...that things which one has so long hoped for, things for which one has prayed so much, made so many efforts, suddenly a moment comes when *they are realised*.

It is the moment when great things are done. One must not miss the opportunity.

(*Long Silence*)

On the 15th of August I shall give you something written by Sri Aurobindo which is precisely on this subject—it is called *The Hour of God*.

You will read it carefully and you will understand.

There we are.

(*Questions and Answers 1954, pp. 266-272*)

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of July 1985)

(These talks are from the notebooks of Dr. Nirodbaran who used to record most of the conversations which Sri Aurobindo had with his attendants and a few others, after the accident to his right leg in November 1938. Besides the recorder, the attendants were: Dr. Manilal, Dr. Becharlal, Purani, Champaklal, Dr. Satyendra and Mulshankar. As the notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo himself, the responsibility for the Master's words rests entirely with Nirodbaran. He does not vouch for absolute accuracy, but he has tried his best to reproduce them faithfully. He has made the same attempts for the speeches of the others.)

October 6, 1940

P: Sarkar says that Art was religious at first everywhere; only India has remained where she was, while Europe has gone forward.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is all right, but where?

P: Going round!

SRI AUROBINDO: And backward. They have gone farther back than we have ever done.

P: What seems to me the point is not whether Art is religious, but it is the inner vision, the inlook, so to say, by which an artist creates, that matters.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite so. Sarkar is scientific.

P: I remember Arjava used to see Krishnalal's pictures like that—the scheme, line, composition—the geometry of art, so to say. Poor Krishnalal couldn't make head or tail of his criticism.

SRI AUROBINDO: He practised without knowing!

N: Moore's article on Gandhi is very strong.

SRI AUROBINDO (*Smiling*): Have you read it?

N: Yes.

P: Yes, it is very strongly worded.

N: But he goes a little too far. He doesn't believe that non-cooperation has done any good—on the other hand it has done much harm, he says.

P: What non-cooperation has done is to show people in a combined state, united in action for a common purpose and thus it has given solidarity and a sense of unity.

S: It has helped to awaken the mass-consciousness tremendously.

SRI AUROBINDO: That of course.

P: Only non-violence has been brought in by Gandhi as a principle though Azad and others have accepted it as a policy.

SRI AUROBINDO: Non-cooperation is nothing new. It is the same as the Swadeshi movement. Only, we had no non-violence. Holland is using non-violence by a violent abuse of words.

P: Abhay says this is the time to preach violence among people in Europe when they are down with the curse of war and violence.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, to preach but not to practise!

Evening

(C. R. has delivered a speech in answer to the Madras Governor. He says that it is easy to sneer at non-violence during war, but it was the non-violent movement that overcame the terrorist activities that had been raging before, and converted the terrorists.)

SRI AUROBINDO: That is too much to say. They were not converted: when they saw that their movement was a failure they took this up as a policy.

S: When there was repression everywhere by the government, it was only this non-violent movement that could have been made and it helped to awake the masses.

SRI AUROBINDO: That, yes. But it was due to the non-cooperation movement, non-violence serving only as a policy. And it succeeded because the common people thought it would give them freedom from zamindars etc. Everybody except Gandhi himself took it up as a policy and, if you do that, then there is no quarrel.

S: Gandhi also was not so strict about non-violence before, because in 1928 he said that government by use of force may be necessary. Only recently he has made nonviolence an absolute faith.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, even at that time it was in his mind. If you keep it for religious and ethical matters, nothing can be said against it. But in politics even his own followers accept it with reservation.

S: Now all are in an uncomfortable position. It seems C. R. would be glad to go back to office.

SRI AUROBINDO: That he feels uncomfortable is quite evident. There is no strength in his speech.

S: If Gandhi had kept out after the Poona meeting, it would have been better for everybody.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh yes, much better.

P: This new Madras Governor gave a hint of conceding Congress demands of a national government at the Centre. So C. R. took it up.

SRI AUROBINDO: In fact many Governors were in its favour. This Governor came fresh from England, didn't know the official mind.

October 7, 1940

P: Gandhi has made a long statement about his interview with the Viceroy. He says that the Viceroy was very patient, very courteous but unbending. Gandhi discussed all problems with him and he listened to everything patiently as no Viceroy had done before. But he didn't go into any argument.

SRI AUROBINDO: Only listened?

P: He says there was a cold reserve about the Viceroy which couldn't be penetrated. From his answers it could be seen that they were all prepared beforehand and he had made his decisions already and nothing could shake him. "And that is what is meant by steel frame, I suppose," he says.

SRI AUROBINDO: To frame him?

P: So Gandhi departed, but as personal friends.

SRI AUROBINDO: And he saw Jonah before going, didn't he?

(*P apparently didn't know what "Jonah" referred to.*)

SRI AUROBINDO: Jonah is the turtle that was saved by the Viceroy from the mouth of a fish and put into a pond. Jonah is a Biblical name. You don't know the story of Jonah?

P: No.

SRI AUROBINDO: Jonah was a saint swallowed by a whale and he remained in its stomach for about 3 days after which he was rescued. So it was quite an apposite name. Gandhi cooed also to Jonah. (*Laughter*)

P: Gandhi complains that the Viceroy didn't say anything in reply to all his questions and problems.

SRI AUROBINDO: What could he say? It is very plain why he didn't. First of all the British don't want to concede the demand for independence. What they are willing to give is Dominion Status after the war and they expect that after that India will settle down into a common relationship with the empire. But just now a National government will virtually mean Dominion Status, with the Viceroy only as a constitutional head. Nobody knows what the Congress will do after they get that power. They may be occupied only with India's defence and give Britain only such help as they can spare. And if things go wrong with the British they may even make a separate peace leaving the British in the lurch. There are left-wingers, Socialists, Communists whom Congress won't be able to bring to their side, neither will they dare to offend them and if their influence is sufficiently strong the Congress may stand against the British. So it is quite natural for the British not to part with power just now. As also it is natural for us to make our claims. But since we have not enough strength to back us we have to see if there is any common meeting-ground with the government. If there is, a compromise with the government is the only practical step. There was such an opportunity but the Congress spoiled it. Now either you have to accept what you get or I don't know what is going to happen.

Of course if we had the strength and power to make a revolution and get what we want, it would be a different matter. Amery etc. did offer Dominion Status at one time. Now they have altered because of the temper of the people. These politicians have some fixed idea and they always go by it. Politicians and statesmen have to take account of situations and act as demanded by them. They must have insight.

P: Even now if we could make common cause and demand things, they would be compelled.

N: But it is because of the British divide-and-rule policy that we can't unite.

SRI AUROBINDO: Nonsense! Was there unity in India before British rule?

N: But now since our national consciousness is more developed there is more chance of unity if the British don't bolster up Jinnah and his Muslim claims.

SRI AUROBINDO: Does Jinnah want unity? His very character shows what he wants. What he wants is independence for Muslims and if possible rule over India. That is the old spirit... But why is it expected that Muslims will be so accommodating? Everywhere minorities are claiming their rights. Of course there may be some Muslims who are different, more nationalistic in outlook. Even Azad has his own terms; only he sees Indian unity first and will settle those terms afterwards.

N: C. R. seems to be sure of British victory. He says Britain won't lose India to Germany.

SRI AUROBINDO: Lose to whom else? Against Germany there is one advantage: the British Navy is supreme. What Germany intends is a long-term blockade of England and thus to exhaust her. But to do that she must have Mediterranean supremacy. If she has that and can also occupy Africa, then she will have endless resources at her disposal. Germany bungled by treating conquered people like slaves and not making use of her opportunity.

P: In these air raids the British have shown themselves more than equal to the Nazis.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. The Nazis have more enthusiasm and dash. But the British individual is awake and has more initiative and brain-power.

P: Some military correspondent writes that Britain can make an offensive and invade Germany through the Adriatic.

SRI AUROBINDO: They are looking far ahead. But where will they land their troops? Yugoslavia? That means violating Balkan independence. Rather, with their troops in Palestine they can take Syria and then, with Turkey siding with them, proceed towards Germany. That would be much easier than through the Adriatic. For the Adriatic is far more risky and difficult, for the Italians guard the coast. Turkey will side with the British if the British are powerful enough....

(Rameshwar is bringing out a booklet containing Sri Aurobindo's writings on Bankim Tilak, Dayanand and Romesh Dutt. He has asked in what order they should be put. Nolini asks why Romesh Dutt should come after Bankim.)

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know. I don't know why he should be there at all.
(Laughter)

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

HOW AUGUST 15 — SRI AUROBINDO'S BIRTH-DATE — GOT CHOSEN FOR INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE DAY

An Extract from Chapter 8 of *Freedom at Midnight* by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, with Acknowledgments to the Authors and Vikas Publishing House

...SUDDENLY, when the long barrage of questions began to trickle out, the anonymous voice of an Indian newsman cut across the chamber. His was the last question awaiting an answer. It was the last square left for Mountbatten to fill in in the puzzle he'd been assigned six months before.

'Sir,' the voice said, 'if all agree that there is most urgent need for speed between today and the Transfer of Power, surely you should have a date in mind?'

'Yes, indeed,' replied Mountbatten.

'And if you have chosen a date, Sir, what then is that date?' pressed the questioner.

A number of rapid calculations went whurring through the Viceroy's mind as he listened to these questions. He had not, in fact, picked a date. But he was convinced it had to be very soon.

'I had to force the pace,' he recalled later. 'I knew I had to force parliament to get the bill through before their summer recess to hold the thing together. We were sitting on the edge of a volcano, on a fused bomb, and we didn't know when the fuse would go off.' Like the blurred images of a horror film, the charred corpses of Kahuta flashed across Louis Mountbatten's mind. If an outburst of similar tragedies was not to drag all India into an apocalypse, he had to go fast. After 3000 years of history, 200 of *Pax Britannica*, only a few weeks remained, the Viceroy believed, between India and chaos.

He stared at the packed assembly hall. Every face in the room was turned to his. A hushed, expectant silence broken only by the whirl of the wooden blades of the fans revolving overhead stilled the room. 'I was determined to show I was the master of the whole event,' he would remember.

'Yes,' he said, 'I have selected a date for the Transfer of Power.'

As he was uttering those words, the possible dates were still whizzing through his mind like the numbers on a spinning roulette wheel. Early September? Mid-September? Mid-August? Suddenly the wheel stopped with a jar and the little ball popped into a slot so overwhelmingly appropriate that Mountbatten's decision was instantaneous. It was a date linked in his memory to the most triumphant hours of his own existence, the day on which his long crusade through the jungles of Burma had ended with the unconditional surrender of the Japanese Empire. What more appropriate date for the birth of the new democratic Asia than the second anniversary of Japan's surrender?

His voice constricted with sudden emotion, the victor of the jungles of Burma about to become the liberator of India announced:

‘The final Transfer of Power to Indian hands will take place on 15 August 1947.’

Louis Mountbatten’s spontaneous decision to announce the date of Indian independence on his own initiative was a bombshell. In the corridors of the House of Commons, Downing Street, Buckingham Palace, no one had suspected Mountbatten was ready to ring the curtain down so precipitously on Britain’s Indian adventure. In Delhi, the Viceroy’s most intimate collaborators had no inkling of what Mountbatten was going to do. Not even the Indian leaders with whom he had spent so many hours had received a hint that he would act with such decisive haste.

GLIMPSES

HERE is a miracle,
There is a splendour.
Your temple is lit
With bonfire of wonder.

The sky is blue,
Your Sun’s royalty shines.
Blossoms the grass
Under tall tree-twines.

A mindless soldier
In a war not his own
Plants an epitaph of tears
On enemy unknown.

There glows Your smile,
A heaven beams on earth.
A frail little child
Hounds sorrow with its mirth.

RABINDRA KUMAR PADHI

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of July 1985)

The Mother's Message

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



Volume Two: 1958

3

ON 8th February 1958 a card came from the Mother displaying three cute kittens playing with an egg. She had inscribed on the card:

“With faith in the Divine Grace, all difficulties are solved.”

What Grace? What faith? How are all the difficulties solved? Nothing seemed positive. On the contrary I was submerged in unconsciousness.

But, no, the Mother was reluctant to accept my views, my disappointment. She had written on yet another card showing a little girl lying on her stomach watching a teddy-bear which leaned against the tree-trunk:

“With eternal love, and the constant compassion of the Divine’s Grace.”

In the evening the Mother and I met in her room at the Playground. She looked at me for a few seconds and plunged into a deep concentration. I couldn’t care less, didn’t bother to respond, didn’t contemplate. My vagrant thoughts rambled on. She was serenely peaceful, unruffled, untouched.

She opened her eyes and spoke with great regret:

“Just now I saw beautiful luminous beings from above bringing precious gifts for you. They wished to enter your whole being with these boons. But unhappily you were completely shut up and denied them. So they went back where they came from.”

There were no tears in my eyes—only solid, unutterable despair.

The Mother looked at me and smiled a sad smile. I failed to collaborate, to receive, to assimilate. I was sick—very sick in my heart, in my mind, in my body. She leaned from her couch, patted my cheeks and affirmed:

“The luminous beings will return one day and enter your whole being.”

At present I cannot help thinking of those lines in *Savitri* Bk. III, C. IV:

“I saw the Ominipotent’s flaming pioneers
Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life
Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth;
Forerunners of a divine multitude
Out of the paths of the morning star they came
Into the little room of mortal life.
I saw them cross the twilight of an age,
The sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn,
The great creators with wide brows of calm,
The massive barrier-breakers of the world
And wrestlers with destiny in her lists of will,
The labourers in the quarries of the gods,
The messengers of the Incommunicable,
The architects of immortality.

Into the fallen human sphere they came,
 Faces that wore the Immortal's glory still,
 Voices that communed still with the thoughts of God,
 Bodies made beautiful by the Spirit's light,
 Carrying the magic word, the mystic fire,
 Carrying the Dionysian cup of joy,
 Approaching eyes of a diviner man,
 Lips chanting an unknown anthem of the soul,
 Feet echoing in the corridors of Time.
 High priests of wisdom, sweetness, might and bliss,
 Discoverers of beauty's sunlit ways
 And swimmers of Love's laughing fiery floods
 And dancers within rapture's golden doors,
 Their tread one day shall change the suffering earth
 And justify the light on Nature's face."

*

On the 10th I concluded three years in the Ashram. The Mother had written on a Japanese card:

"To my dear little child Huta,
 With all my love and sweetest compassion.
 Pour une bonne fête."

In the afternoon Nolini, Amrita, Champaklal, Dyuman, Udar and his wife Mona, Maniben, some others and myself were waiting for the Mother at the gate of Huta House. For at last the renovation of my apartment had been completed.

Her car approached driven by Pavitra with Pranab beside him. The Mother asked Pranab to remain in the car.

Along with all of us she climbed the long red staircase. The key was in the Yale lock which she turned, declaring my apartment open. The door led to my studio. The Mother sat on a revolving chair and did my portrait on a canvas board placed on the easel. Her skilful hand took no more than a few moments to finish it. Underneath it she wrote:

Bienvenue dans la belle maison. Bonne Fête pour la 3e fois.
 10-2-58 -The Mother

She regarded her work with an amused sparkle in her eyes, then said:

"Ah! in this sketch your head looks like a philosopher's head."

Her pleasant laugh rang out and set us all laughing.

Then with slow footsteps she entered my sitting room. While looking around, she admired everything, especially a wooden stand with a brass vase supported by three elephants. The arrangement of pink Harmony flowers appealed to her very much.

The same vase and stand are now in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Library. I feel that they look lovely there.

The Mother sat on a divan for a short while. After that, she peeped into my Meditation Room and turned to my bed-room. She sat on my bed for a few seconds. Next she passed through my bathroom to a small passage and then to the terrace.

I remember Nolini exclaiming: "The bathroom is admirable!"

Across the terrace she entered the kitchen. There she examined everything minutely and nodded approval.

From the kitchen we all went to the terrace garden. She showed pleasure in each plant. Her eyes lit up when she saw a few white roses which were swaying gently in the breeze. She also leaned and took a whiff of Honey suckle. Then back to the studio. She asked everyone to leave. They went downstairs to wait for her. Champaklal, who carried a crystal bowl of white roses, gave it to the Mother and left.

Now she and I were alone in my apartment. We went into the Meditation Room. Her glance fell on her own portrait which she had done the previous year and had asked me to keep in this room when my apartment would be ready. She smiled happily and placed the bowl on the altar where photographs of Sri Aurobindo and herself, chosen by her, had been installed. Her signature was visible on her picture.

Then she took her seat on a chair specially made for her with light-blue velvet cushions. She put her feet on a foot-stool. First she looked intently at the photographs, and closed her eyes for a few minutes. Then with open eyes she meditated for half an hour. I sat near her chair, watching and thinking.

She turned her face towards me and promised:

"Child, Sri Aurobindo and I will be here for all twenty-four hours.

Whenever you feel lonely, miserable and sad, just sit here and you will be all right."

She got up from the chair, held me close and kissed my forehead. Then she put her arm around my shoulders and we climbed down. I was silent. The Mother must have seen and felt my soul's gratitude in my eyes when on parting I waved her *au revoir*.

The people who visited my apartment were all praise and admiration for my abode. I thanked them all.

After the Mother had played tennis, she went to the Playground. Before the Translation Class, she called me and said enthusiastically:

“Child, I really like your house. It is so peaceful and quiet. I will come to your apartment every night in my subtle body.”

With a smile she added:

“When Yogis and Saints are disturbed, they at once meditate and find peace again. But there is also a special Grace: then you have concrete peace and nothing can affect you.

“The mind and the vital give constant trouble and disturbance when they act under the impulse of Falsehood.

“When you have inner strength, when there is no more ego, the Power and Light can come and fill your whole being. After that you can remain absolutely in peace and calm.”

The next morning, as always, a card and white roses came from the Mother.

It was pretty difficult to leave Golconde, because in my apartment I would be all alone. I felt extremely dejected. But I could not help it—I decided to leave Golconde the very next day: on 12th February.

I got busy packing my belongings in a small case with tears in my eyes.

In the evening I expressed my feeling to the Mother: “I feel rotten to leave Golconde where I have stayed exactly three years. Mother, I do not really know how I will manage and run my apartment. I will certainly be lonely. What should I do?”

My eyes glazed with sudden tears. She drifted into a trance. On waking she spoke soothingly:

“Last night I went out in my subtle body. I took your consciousness from Golconde and brought it into your new apartment. It was so quiet and packed with a peaceful atmosphere. I sat on a divan in your sitting room as I had sat in reality when I had declared the apartment open yesterday.

“You know, mon petit, the sitting room was filled with those beings whom you had drawn in your note-books on tinted papers. They came one by one from the books which are with me now, and assembled in the sitting room. I wanted to be sure whether they were real. So I closed my eyes and saw with an occult eye that the books were absolutely blank, because the beings were sitting with us. We all meditated for half an hour. After that, I took back your consciousness to Golconde. When I came back to my apartment, I saw that those figures had returned to the books. Truly it was very nice.”

I was amazed to learn all this from the Mother and wondered how the beings I had drawn could come out from the books. But I had heard many a time the Mother saying, after seeing the sketches and giving them meanings, that they were living.

The spiritual occultism and its mysteries are incalculable.

Much later, the Mother gave back to me all the note-books of drawings and asked me to keep them intact and preserve them preciously.

She held my hands and looked at me, her eyes shining like shimmering onyx. I raised my eyes to meet hers, and said: "Mother, I don't understand why in spite of my disbelief, scepticism, lack of faith I pine for the Divine and that ardency brings tears to my eyes. It will definitely take ages for me to realise the truth of occult things and read the riddle of this life. Sometimes without rhyme or reason I weep. What is the cause? Am I mad?"

Her face broke into laughter when she answered:

"No, my child. Tears sometimes fill your eyes when you have the intensity of Truth in you."

Everything was too much for me to grasp.

The following morning I received a card from the Mother, depicting a moon-lit river, a number of deer stood on its bank. She had written on the card:

"To my dear little child Huta
With a quiet and strong peace of eternal compassion."

Alas! Peace? Where was it? It was not easy to obtain the divine peace. I had to pay the heavy price for that blissful peace.

I had been desperate to get it back ever since I had lost it. The Mother had given me a unique experience in 1956 only for half an hour or so. I felt the pain of the loss almost beyond bearing and then the inability to achieve that state.

Dull depression, anguished heart and restless mind had pinned me down for the past two weeks.

Indeed, with much regret I went to stay in my new house. I was totally at a loss in my big apartment. I did not really know where to start and where to end. I flung myself across my bed and lay there, too stunned by the swift passage of events and my own emotional turmoil even to cry.

One of the maids from Golconde was given to me by Mona.

At that time from the General Dining Room a sadhak used to go from house to house to give the tiffin-carriers. My tiffin-carrier was put in the wooden box which had been fixed to the wall at the top of my staircase, to the left side of my door. In addition the boiled vegetables which Mona used to give me at Golconde from her house came to my apartment. The Mother's daily prasad was also sent.

After my lunch, the maid washed the tiffin-carrier and put it in the box from which it was later taken by the same sadhak for the next day's lunch. The other utensils were sent to their places.

For dinner I took the left-over bread and vegetable—and the next morning I

took coffee, bread and butter. The butter melted rapidly, because at that time I had no refrigerator.

As a matter of fact, I was not at all keen on taking food. I ate like a sparrow. I had lost interest in everything—I was weary of everything. I did not know how I could have lived so far. It was an enigma.

My maid servant was heartless, careless. Her work was haphazard. I could not communicate with her, because I hardly knew the Tamil language. When I said something, she understood something else and did quite the contrary. I was fed up and feeling wretched.

Mona was kind enough to give another maid named Sakubai Mudaliar, who was very patient, faithful, considerate and full of feeling. She had been in Golconde and knew my needs and ways. She worked with me for almost twenty years. Now she is old and on pension. Yet she helps me whenever her help is required.

*

I wanted to forget my difficulties, troubles and sufferings. So more and more I occupied myself in drawing pictures in my note-books. I sent some of them to the Mother. She remarked:

“These pictures, as usual, are very good and full of promise for future realisation.”

Realisation? All these words seemed void, vain. How could I ever realise anything when I had lost peace of mind?

I started a new series of drawings. They were the expression of my psychic being.

The Mother concentrated on them and wrote their significances which were too mystifying for me.

(To be continued)

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SRI AUROBINDO

Summary of the Inaugural Address by His Excellency Sri T. P. Tewary, Lt.-Governor, Pondicherry, at the function organised on 6th April 1985 by the Pondicherry Citizens' Committee to commemorate the completion, on 4th April, of the 75th year of Sri Aurobindo's arrival at Pondicherry.

It is most gratifying that the Pondicherry Citizens' Committee has organised this function to commemorate the 75th Year of the arrival of Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry.

Sri Aurobindo belongs to the entire universe. He did not belong to a particular place or a particular period. Through his self-discipline and Tapasya, he elevated himself from the limitations of time and space. The South has been the custodian of the ancient Indian culture and civilization. It has produced most outstanding thinkers, savants and sages who have enriched religious literature with the highest degree of perfection. The Nayanmars, the Alvars, Thiruvalluvar, Kamban and a host of others produced immortal literature which inspired their generations and which will continue to inspire generation after generation.

Pondicherry occupies a very important place in the South. It is a sanctified place. Even western historians and writers have testified that this was the place where Maharshi Agastya performed his austerities. It has been suggested that the place where the Ashram is situated was the place where Agastya Muni had performed his austerities. It was known in the past as 'Vedapuri'. It was a great centre of Sanskrit learning. It was, therefore, most appropriate and in fact it was Divine guidance that of all the places Sri Aurobindo chose to come to this place.

Mr. Ganesan in his address described in detail the welcome which was accorded to Sri Aurobindo by the citizens of Pondicherry. It is a matter of pride that Pondicherry has been in the forefront in welcoming the fighters for freedom, in welcoming great littérateurs and has been the supporter of all noble causes. It is amazing that in a period when the imperial power was most powerful, the citizens of Pondicherry should have extended welcome and support in defiance of the wishes of the imperial power. When people were hounded out from British India, when they were subjected to suppression and indignity, they could come to Pondicherry with the sure hope of being welcomed. Persons who were engaged in fighting for freedom in Tamil Nadu and in other places, when they found that they could not carry on their activities in their respective places, came to Pondicherry and they were welcomed with open arms. The journal which was fighting for freedom and was being published from Madras under the title 'INDIA' could not be continued there. The publishers and others thought that they could carry on their activities here. This newspaper 'INDIA' had an association with the arrival of Sri Aurobindo. The manner in which welcome was accorded to Sri Aurobindo, the accommodation which was offered by Shri Shankar Chettiar, the assistance

which was given by various citizens will continue to inspire the generations to come. It was an act of self-sacrifice. It was an act of courage and it was a support for the liberation movement of the country.

The life of Sri Aurobindo will remain relevant for all times to come and for all sections of society. Take his period of studies. He went to England at the tender age of seven years. He spent 14 years in England. The instructions of his parents were that he should be brought up entirely in the occidental environment. A person who spends 14 years of the most formative and impressive period of his life in England, who attains the highest academic grades, yet when he comes to the motherland he immediately realises the call of the motherland. All the impact that was created on him by the western atmosphere did not make him lose the sense of identity and the sense of belonging to the motherland.

Sri Aurobindo joined service in Baroda. This period was a period of spiritual experiences also. He became conscious of certain deficiencies in regard to his knowledge of Sanskrit which is the store-house of our culture, Darshan, philosophy and civilisation and he, therefore, studied Sanskrit. He again realised that the liberation of the country was one of the foremost duties of a citizen and he plunged headlong into the struggle for freedom of the country. No sacrifice was great enough to deter him from fighting for the freedom of the country. All the time he was preparing himself for the ultimate goal. He was implicated in the Alipore Bomb case. This was a blessing in disguise. When he was confined to the jail, he got an opportunity for his Sadhana and Yoga. He realised that God was present everywhere. He saw Vasudev everywhere and as our Gita says:

*'Yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvam ca mayi paśyati,
tasyāham na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati'*

(VI-30)

*'Sarvabhūtasthamātmānam sarvabhūtāni cātmani
ikṣte yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ'*

(VI-29)

He saw God everywhere. He saw Vasudev in the trees, in the prisoners and in the walls of the prison. He realised the Omnipresence of God. This was a very important turning-point in his life and when he was released he knew what was expected of him, what was his destiny. Then that crucial decision was made by him to move to Chandannagore and from there to Pondicherry. He arrived here on 4th April, 1910 and thereafter began the great chapter of his spiritual pursuit.

It will thus be seen that the life of Sri Aurobindo has a great lesson for us. The danger of losing our identity was never greater than what it is today. A little introspection, individual as well as collective, is necessary. Where are we going? What is the atmosphere that is prevailing on the campuses of the colleges and Universities? Why this tilt towards certain unhealthy Western trends? We are a

receptive people. We have an open mind. We want to grasp good things from every place. As our savants and sages and the right-thinking western thinkers have also said, India has a message to give and if India loses its identity, the hope of the world will be lost. So, if on the college campuses, in the market places and in the homes there is any sense of alienation from our heritage, that is a most dangerous trend. The life of Sri Aurobindo is a beacon light for this patch of darkness. A person who goes to England at the tender age of seven, remains there for 14 years, instructions having been given that nothing oriental should touch him, when he comes back to the country, re-discovers the values, the ancient values, the permanent values of this land and dedicates himself whole-heartedly to nurse, protect and propagate them.

Again, he realised that patriotism was the highest religion. It was in keeping with what Maryadha Purushotham Ram said:

“Jananī janmabhūmiśca sargādapi gariyasi.”

In Bhawani Mandir Sri Aurobindo answers the question, “What is our mother country?”

“It is not a piece of earth, nor a figure of speech, nor a fiction of the mind. It is a mighty Shakti, composed of the Shaktis of all the millions of units that make up the nation, just as Bhawani Mahisha Mardini sprang into being from the Shakti of all the millions of gods assembled in one mass of force and welded into unity.

“Mother India is not a piece of earth; she is a power, a Godhead, for all nations have such a Devi supporting their separate existence and keeping it in being. Such beings are as real and more permanently real than the men they influence, but they belong to a higher plane, are part of the cosmic consciousness and being and act here on earth by shaping the human consciousness on which they exercise their influence.

“Each nation is a Shakti or power of the evolving spirit in humanity and lives by the principle which it embodies. India is the Bharata Shakti, the living energy of a great spiritual conception, and her fidelity to it is the very principle of her existence. For by its virtue alone she has been one of the immortal nations; this alone has been the secret of her amazing persistence and perpetual force of survival and revival.”

There is nothing more sacred than our motherland which is even higher than paradise and he defined the motherland as a Shakti which is composed of the Shakti of the Devi. It is not merely a piece of earth, it is full of life, full of vigour and full of Shakti. We have to identify ourselves with that Shakti. If Bharat is Shaktiman, if India is powerful, an Indian can never be weak and if Bharat is weak, no Indian can be powerful howsoever rich and howsoever strong he might be. If Bharat is not there, there would be no Indian. So, patriotism, national unity and national strength are interlinked. One gives strength to the other. Through his life, Sri Aurobindo

highlighted that the motherland expects all sacrifices from the citizens and they must be prepared to worship her with toil and sweat and blood.

The life of Sri Aurobindo, as I said, will remain relevant for all sections of the society. As far as his spiritual pursuits are concerned, persons like Shri Madhav Pandit would be able to throw more light. His philosophy has attracted sensitive souls and right-thinking persons from abroad and even in this gathering here we have the presence of such seekers from other countries. India has a message to give and that message has to be practised by the citizens so that the whole Darshan is available in the atmosphere itself. Sri Aurobindo said that One Being and Consciousness is involved here in matter. Evolution is the process by which it liberates itself; consciousness appears in what seems to be inconscient and once having appeared is self-impelled to grow higher and at the same time to enlarge and develop towards a greater and greater perfection. Life is the first step of this release of consciousness; mind is the second; but the evolution does not finish with mind, it awaits a release into something greater, a consciousness which is spiritual and supramental. The next step of the evolution must be towards the development of Supermind and Spirit as the dominant power in the conscious being. For only then will the involved Divinity in things release itself entirely and it become possible for life to manifest perfection. We have, therefore, to continue our endeavour in that direction. Pondicherry being a sanctified place, conditions are most propitious here for the spiritual pursuit.

The Mother said: "Go on aspiring and the necessary progress is bound to come."

That is the message of hope for all of us.

Now, with these words, I express my gratitude to the organisers of this function which reminds us that we place before ourselves again and again the life and work of Sri Aurobindo. He put forth before mankind "The Life Divine" without which human existence would be without its purpose. In his "Essays on the Gita" he interpreted the most vigorous, relevant and illuminating philosophy for the benefit of his countrymen and humanity at large. "Savitri" was again an inspired work. Some of his other works are: "The Synthesis of Yoga, The Isha Upanishad, The Foundations of Indian Culture, The Secret of the Veda, The Human Cycle, The Future Poetry, The Ideal of Human Unity." The unique character of Indian Darshan has been that while retaining its intrinsic and eternal character it has always been capable of being interpreted in a language and manner which would also be relevant to the ethos and needs of a particular period. In human affairs, there is something which is changeless and something which is changing in accordance with the laws of nature. This appreciation of the eternal and the transient has enabled the Indian heritage to have an unrivalled continuity.

Now all this immortal literature and philosophy have to be studied and absorbed so that India may re-establish its glory and fulfil the hope of its destiny.

Thank you.

15TH AUGUST AND SRI AUROBINDO

“Sri Aurobindo is an incarnation of the Supreme who came on earth to announce the manifestation of a new race and a new world, the Supramental. Let us prepare for it in all sincerity and eagerness.”
— *The Mother*

15TH August was the day on which Sri Ramakrishna started to enter Mahasamadhi and Sri Aurobindo was born.

“What Sri Ramakrishna gathered up of India’s past into a pure and sheer spiritual splendour which held the common power of many approaches and attainments of Yoga became in Sri Aurobindo’s experience the starting-point for a rich, complex, integrally harmonised future. The one revived the Indian genius and, by a general summing up of its potentialities, prepared it for whatever the coming age might hold: the other fixed it firm in its renaissance, lit with it all the spheres of man’s evolutionary labour and, charging it with a mission beyond any of the past, laid down the luminous pattern of the new age itself. The end of the synthesis made by the one is the beginning of the integrality achieved by the other. That is why the day of Sri Ramakrishna’s passing merges in the day of Sri Aurobindo’s advent.”¹

What does the Mother say about this day? She affirms:

“I spoke of the birth of Sri Aurobindo... I called it an eternal birth. The consequences of Sri Aurobindo’s birth will be felt throughout the entire existence of the Earth. So I called it ‘eternal’.”²

The following powerful speech was delivered by Sri Aurobindo to the young men who met and congratulated him in the Sanjivani office on 15th August in the year 1909 on the occasion of his birthday:

“In my childhood before the full development of my faculties, I became conscious of a strong impulse in me. I did not realise what it was then, but it grew stronger and stronger as I gained in years till all the weakness of my childhood, fear, selfishness, etc., vanished from my mind. From the day of my return to the mother country, the impulse is surging forth in great force, and my set purpose and devotion are becoming more confirmed with the trials and oppressions to which I am subjected. When some Divine Power by the Grace of God manifests itself in a human being any efforts to develop it give a new force to the national life. You will have to sacrifice yourself at the feet of your mother. You should, therefore, devote yourself with firm faith and whole heart to her service. Service of our motherland is our highest duty at this moment. This must be our duty in this iron age. It is now the time for us to conserve our energy. Do not be impatient, do not despair. Do not lose faith. The present fatigue and inactivity are natural; you will find instances of them in the history of every nation. Everyone must store up energy. Be prepared, with fresh hope and vigour for the worship of the Mother. Divine Power has infused this nation with a new power. This power will exalt the nation one day.”³

In Bengali, the name "Aurobindo" means "Lotus." How did the selection of the name take place? Sri Aurobindo has written:

"Look at the irony of human decisions and human hopes. My father who wanted all his sons to be great men—and succeeded in a small way with three of them—in a sudden inspiration gave me the name Aurobindo, till then not borne by anyone in India or the wide world, that I might stand out unique among the great by the unique glory of my name. And now... when I went to the National College in the Swadeshi days which was my first public step towards the ignominies of fame, there was already an Aurobindo Prakash waiting for me there with the sardonic comment of the gods printed on his learned forehead. Aurobindo Prakash. indeed!"⁴

"The full name given at the time of christening, however, was Aravinda Ackroyd* Ghose. This name was continued till he left England after the completion of his studies. Thereafter he was Aurobindo Ghose till he withdrew from politics. During the earlier period of his retirement and spiritual askesis, he was simply A.G. though he would sign, 'Kali' in some correspondence, Kali signifying Shakti (Power) of Sri Krishna. After November 24, 1926 the day of his *Siddhi*, realisation of the Krishna Consciousness in the physical—he came to be known as Sri Aurobindo."⁵

When Promode Kumar Chatterji made a painting from Sri Aurobindo's boyhood photograph and brought it to the Mother, she remarked: "You have caught something of the spontaneity and freshness of the nature and something candid with which he came into this world. His inner being was on the surface. He knew nothing of this world."⁶

He was sent to England for an English education. He mastered Greek and Latin and some other foreign languages. In spite of his being entirely bred abroad, what were his feelings when he was preparing to leave that country after staying there fourteen years?

"There was no... regret in leaving England, no attachment to the past or misgivings for the future. Few friendships were made in England and none very intimate; the mental atmosphere was not found congenial.

"...There was an attachment to English and European thought and literature, but not to England as a country; he had no ties there and did not make England his adopted country, as Manmohan did for a time. If there was attachment to a European land as a second country, it was intellectually and emotionally to one not seen or lived in in this life, not England, but France."⁷

1893, the year in which Sri Aurobindo came back from England to fight for the freedom of India, was the year in which Vivekananda went to America with the message of the Vedanta to enlighten the humanity of the West.

* When he was born, Miss Annette Ackroyd, who later married Henry Beveridge, the then officiating District and Sessions Judge of Rangpur, happened to be present at the christening ceremony, and was requested by Dr. K. D. Ghose to give the child an English name. She gave her father's name as that of the godfather of the child.

Sri Aurobindo made a reference to his early spiritual experiences in the course of a letter to one of his disciples:

“My own life and my Yoga have always been, since my coming to India, both this-worldly and other-worldly without any exclusiveness on either side... Since I set foot on the Indian soil on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay, I began to have spiritual experiences, but these were not divorced from the world, but had an inner and infinite bearing on it, such as a feeling of the Infinite pervading material space and the Immanent inhabiting material objects and bodies. At the same time I found myself entering supraphysical worlds and planes with influences and an effect from them upon the material plane, so I could make no sharp divorce or irreconcilable opposition between what I have called the two ends of existence and all that lies between them.”⁸

Sri Aurobindo has also written:

“This [Yoga] began in London, sprouted the moment I set foot on Apollo Bunder, touching Indian soil, flowered one day in the first year of my stay in Baroda, at the moment when there threatened to be an accident to my carriage.”⁹

Sri Aurobindo's letter to a disciple dated November 7, 1938 throws light on the days of his service under the Maharaja of Baroda:

“Quite agree with your estimate of Kashmir. The charm of its mountains and rivers and the ideal life dawdling along in the midst of a supreme beauty in the slowly moving leisure of a houseboat—that was a kind of earthly Paradise—also writing poetry on the banks of the Jhelum where it rushes down Kashmir towards the plains. Unfortunately there was the over-industrious Gawkwar to cut short the Paradise! His idea of Paradise was going through administrative papers and making myself and others write speeches for which he got all the credit. But after all, according to the nature, to each one his Eden.”¹⁰

Sri Aurobindo reminds us how the Maharaja gave him a certificate “for ability and intelligence but also for lack of punctuality and regularity!”¹¹

Once Sri Aurobindo remarked about his own professorship to one of his disciples: “...I was not so conscientious as a professor. I never used to look at the notes, and sometimes my explanations did not agree with them at all... What was surprising to me was that the students used to take down everything *verbatim* and mug it up. Such a thing would never have happened in England... Once I was giving a lecture on Southey's *Life of Nelson*. My lecture was not in agreement with the notes. So the students remarked that it was not at all like what was found in the notes. I replied: ‘I have not read the notes—in any case they are all rubbish!’ I could never go to the minute details. I read and left my mind to do what it could. That is why I could never become a scholar.”¹²

Dr. C. R. Reddy, in his Address to Andhra University, said:

“I had the honour of knowing him.... A. B. Clark, the principal of the Baroda College, remarked to me, ‘So you met Aurobindo Ghose. Did you notice his eyes? There is mystic fire and light in them. They penetrate into the beyond.’ And

he added, 'If Joan of Arc heard heavenly voices, Aurobindo probably sees heavenly visions'.¹³

A letter of Sri Aurobindo to his father-in-law at Calcutta, dated June 8th 1906, runs:

"I am afraid I shall never be good for much in the way of domestic virtues. I have tried, very ineffectively, to do some part of my duty as a son, a brother and a husband, but there is something too strong in me which forces me to subordinate everything else to it."¹⁴

Sri Aurobindo recounts in his reminiscences of prison life:

"I remembered, fifteen years back, after returning home from England, I had written some bitterly critical articles in the *Induprakash* of Bombay against the petitiory ethics of the then Congress. Seeing that these articles were influencing the minds of the young, the late Mahadeo Govind Ranade told me, when I met him, for nearly half an hour, that I should give up writing these articles and advised me to take up some other Congress work. He was desirous of my taking up the work of prison reform. I was astonished and unhappy at his unexpected suggestion and refused to undertake that work. I did not know then that this was a prelude to the distant future and that one day God himself would keep me in prison for a year and make me see the cruelty and futility of the system and the need for reform."¹⁵

Referring to the year 1904, Sri Aurobindo said of the beginning of his sadhana:

"...I did not know what God was, Deshpande at that time was doing Hatha Yoga, Asanas and other such Kriyas and as he had a great proselytising tendency he wanted to convert me to his view. But I thought that a Yoga which required me to give up the world was not for me. I had to liberate my country. I took to it seriously when I learnt that the same Tapasya which one does to get away from the world can be turned to action, I learnt that Yoga gives power, and I thought why the devil should I not get the power and use it to liberate my country?..."¹⁶

"At this time his brother, Barindra Kumar Ghose, had come home with a mountain fever after his wanderings in the hills in pursuance of his revolutionary interests. No medicine could help. One day a Naga Sannyasi happened to come to the door for alms and seeing the young man shivering, he enquired about it. When he came to know of the fever, he asked for a glass of water to be brought. He took out a knife from his knapsack, recited a Mantra and cut across the water twice diagonally. 'Take this water,' he told Barin, 'and you will have no fever tomorrow.' And so it happened. The young man was free from fever by the next morning. Sri Aurobindo who was watching was impressed. He took to Yoga seriously."¹⁷

Sri Aurobindo writes in *Bande Mataram*, dated 9. 2. 1908:

"The will of the Divine Wisdom is the sole law of revolutions, and we have no right to consider ourselves as anything but mere agents chosen by the Wisdom.... Do you serve the Mother for a reward or do God's work for hire? The patriot lives

for his country because he must; he dies for her because she demands it. That's all."¹⁸

After his release from Alipur Jail Sri Aurobindo made his famous Uttarpara speech in which he cast his mind back to his early days and recounted how he had found his goal:

"When I approached God at that time, I hardly had a living faith in Him. The agnostic was in me, the atheist was in me, the sceptic was in me, and I was not absolutely sure that there was a God at all. I did not feel His presence. Yet something drew me to the truth of the Vedas, the truth of the Gita, the truth of the Hindu religion. I felt there must be a mighty truth somewhere in this Yoga, a mighty truth in this religion based on the Vedanta. So when I turned to the Yoga and resolved to practise it and find out if my idea was right, I did it in this spirit and with this prayer to Him, 'If Thou art, then Thou knowest my heart. Thou knowest that I do not ask for Mukti, I do not ask for anything which others ask for. I ask only for strength to uplift this nation, I ask only to be allowed to live and work for this people whom I love and to whom I pray that I may devote my life.' I strove long for the realisation of Yoga and at last to some extent I had it, but in what I most desired I was not satisfied. Then in the seclusion of the jail, of the solitary cell I asked for it again. I said, 'Give me Thy Adesh. I do not know what work to do or how to do it. Give me a message.' In the communion of Yoga two messages came. The first message said, 'I have given you a work and it is to help to uplift this nation. Before long the time will come when you will have to go out of jail; for it is not my will that this time either you should be convicted or that you should pass the time, as others have to do, in suffering for their country. I have called you to work, and that is the Adesh for which you have asked. I give you the Adesh to go forth and do my work.' The second message came and it said, 'Something has been shown to you in this year of seclusion, something about which you had your doubts and it is the truth of the Hindu religion. It is this religion that I am raising up before the world, it is this that I have perfected and developed through the Rishis, saints and Avatars, and now it is going forth to do my work among the nations. I am raising up this nation to send forth my word. This is the Sanatan Dharma, this is the eternal religion...'"¹⁹

Subsequently Sri Aurobindo started two journals, *Dharma* and *Karma Yogin*, to awaken the nation to the true spirit of its culture and to its spiritual heritage.

Henry Nevinson, member of Parliament from England, who interviewed Sri Aurobindo [in 1907], concluded his account in *The New Spirit in India*: "Grave with intensity, careless of fate or opinion and one of the most silent men I have known, he was of the stuff that dreamers are made of, but dreamers who act their dreams, indifferent to the means."²⁰

"The British were going to so much trouble to keep track of Sri Aurobindo because, quite simply, they were terrified of him. Sir Lancelot Hare, Lieutenant Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam (the L. G. was the highest administrative

officer in this province and in Bengal), wrote on 5 August 1909 that Sri Aurobindo, who had recently been touring in his domain, was 'a dangerous character', and 'more especially dangerous in that he is preaching a religious patriotism.'²¹

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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INDIA IN SRI AUROBINDO'S VISION

(This article, with its appropriate extracts from Sri Aurobindo, was a paper read out at the Seminar on "The Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo" under the auspices of the Tamilnadu Philosophical Society on March 9, 1985 at the Tagore Arts College, Pondicherry.)

SRI AUROBINDO, the philosopher, the Yogi, was in the vanguard of the struggle for political independence before he settled in Pondicherry in the year 1910. In his monthly journal, *Arya*, he wrote a series of articles from December 1918 to January 1921, now available in book-form under the title *The Foundations of Indian Culture*. Although written as a defence of Indian culture against the ill-conceived attempts of some westerners to deride our country, the treatment of the subject was done on a very high level of keen and deep and balanced observation so characteristic of a true philosopher-Yogi.

For this study Sri Aurobindo starts with the proposition that man is in search of true happiness and that the attainment of this object ought to be the test of any civilisation, any culture. He says,

"A true happiness in this world is the right terrestrial aim of man, and true happiness lies in the finding and maintenance of a natural harmony of spirit, mind and body. A culture is to be valued to the extent to which it has discovered the right key of this harmony and organised its expressive motives and movements. And a civilisation must be judged by the manner in which all its principles, ideas, forms, ways of living work to bring that harmony out, manage its rhythmic play and secure its continuance or the development of its motives. A civilisation in pursuit of this aim may be predominantly material like modern European culture, predominantly mental and intellectual like the old Graeco-Roman or predominantly spiritual like the still persistent culture of India.

"India's central conception is that of the Eternal, the Spirit here encased in matter, involved and immanent in it and evolving on the material plane by rebirth of the individual up the scale of being till in mental man it enters the world of ideas and realm of conscious morality, *dharma*. This achievement, this victory over unconscious matter develops its lines, enlarges its scope, elevates its levels until the increasing manifestation of the sattwic or spiritual portion of the vehicle of mind enables the individual mental being in man to identify himself with the pure spiritual consciousness beyond Mind.

"India's social system is built upon this conception; her philosophy formulates it; her religion is an aspiration to the spiritual consciousness and its fruits; her art and literature have the same upward look; her whole *dharma* or law of being is founded upon it. Progress she admits, but this spiritual progress, not the externally self-unfolding process of an always more and more prosperous and efficient material civilisation. It is her founding of life upon this exalted conception and

her urge towards the spiritual and the eternal that constitute the distinct value of her civilisation. And it is her fidelity, with whatever human shortcomings, to this highest ideal that has made her people a nation apart in the human world."

According to Sri Aurobindo the culture of a nation may be said to be a three-fold expression of the consciousness of life. Firstly, there is the aspect of thought, ideal, upward will, the aspiration of the soul. Secondly, there is the creative self-expression and appreciative aesthesis. Thirdly, there is a practical and outward formulation. He elaborates,

"A people's philosophy and higher thinking give us its mind's purest, largest and most general formulation of its consciousness of life and its dynamic view of existence. Its religion formulates the most intense form of its upward will and the soul's aspirations towards the fulfilment of its highest ideal and impulse. Its art, poetry, literature provide for us the creative expression and impression of its intuition, imagination, vital turn and creative intelligence. Its society and politics provide in their forms an outward frame in which the more external life works out what it can of its inspiring ideals and of its special character and nature under the difficulties of the environment. We can see how much it has taken of the crude materials of living, what it has done with it, how it has shaped as much of it as possible into some reflection of its guiding consciousness and deeper spirit. None of them express the whole secret spirit behind, but they derive from it their main ideas and their cultural character. Together they make up its soul, mind and body."

What have been the salient features of the expression of these three aspects in Indian civilisation? Here, says Sri Aurobindo, "Philosophy and religion, philosophy made dynamic by religion, religion enlightened by philosophy have led, the rest follow as best they can. This is indeed its first distinctive character, which it shares with the more developed Asiatic peoples, but has carried to an extraordinary degree of thorough-going pervasiveness."

"Indian culture," he says, "has been from the beginning and has remained a spiritual, an inward-looking religio-philosophical culture. Everything else in it has derived from that one central and original peculiarity or has been in some way dependent on it or subordinate to it; even external life has been subjected to the inward look of the spirit."

This first aspect, that of religion and philosophy, has dominated the second one, that of creative self-expression in arts, literature and architecture. Sri Aurobindo speaks thus about Indian literature,

"The ancient and classical creations of the Sanskrit tongue both in quality and in body and abundance of excellence, in their potent originality and force and beauty, in their substance and art and structure, in grandeur and justice and charm of speech and in the height and width of the reach of their spirit stand very evidently in the front rank among the world's great literatures. The language itself, as has been universally recognised by those competent to form a judgement, is one of the most magnificent, the most perfect and wonderfully sufficient literary instruments deve-

loped by the human mind, at once majestic and sweet and flexible, strong and clearly-formed and full and vibrant and subtle, and its quality and character would be of itself a sufficient evidence of the character and quality of the race whose mind it expressed and the culture of which it was the reflecting medium. The great and noble use made of it by poet and thinker did not fall below the splendour of its capacities.

“Nor is it in the Sanskrit tongue alone that the Indian mind has done high and beautiful and perfect things, though it couched in that language the larger part of its most prominent and formative and grandest creations. It would be necessary for a complete estimate to take into account as well the Buddhistic literature in Pali and the poetic literatures, here opulent, there more scanty in production, of about a dozen Sanskritic and Dravidian tongues.

“The whole has almost a continental effect and does not fall so far short in the quantity of its really lasting things and equals in its things of best excellence the work of ancient and mediaeval and modern Europe. The people and the civilisation that count among their great works and their great names the Veda and the Upanishads, the mighty structures of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, Kalidas and Bhavabhuti and Bhartrihari and Jayadeva and the other rich creations of classical Indian drama and poetry and romance, the Dhammapada and the Jatakas, the Panchatantra, Tulsidas, Vidyapati and Chandidas and Ramprasad, Ramdas and Tukaram, Tiruvalluvar and Kamban and the songs of Nanak and Kabir and Mirabai and the southern Shaiva saints and the Alwars,—to name only the best-known writers and most characteristic productions, though there is a very large body of other work in the different tongues of both the first and the second excellence,—must surely be counted among the greatest civilisations and the world’s most developed and creative peoples.”

About our architecture Sri Aurobindo observes,

“The secular buildings of ancient India, her places of assembly and civic edifices have not outlived the ravage of time; what remains to us is mostly something of the great mountain and cave temples, something too of the temples of her ancient cities of the plains, and for the rest we have the fanes and shrines of her later times, whether situated in temple cities and places of pilgrimage like Srirangam and Rameshwaram or in her great once regal towns like Madura, when the temple was the centre of life. It is then the most hieratic side of a hieratic art that remains to us. These sacred buildings are the signs, the architectural self-expression of an ancient spiritual and religious culture. Ignore the spiritual suggestion, the religious significance, the meaning of the symbols and indications, look only with the rational and secular aesthetic mind, and it is vain to expect that we shall get to any true and discerning appreciation of this art.

“And it has to be remembered too that the religious spirit here is something quite different from the sense of European religions; and even mediaeval Christianity, especially as now looked at by the modern European mind which has gone

through the two great crises of the Renaissance and recent secularism, will not in spite of its oriental origin and affinities be of much real help. To bring in into the artistic look on an Indian temple occidental memories or a comparison with Greek Parthenon or Italian church or Duomo or Campanile or even the great Gothic cathedrals of mediaeval France, though these have in them something much nearer to the Indian mentality, is to intrude a fatally foreign and disturbing element or standard on the mind. But this consciously or else subconsciously is what almost every European mind does to a greater or less degree,—and it is here a pernicious immixture, for it subjects the work of a vision that saw the immeasurable to the tests of an eye that dwells only on measure.

“Indian sacred architecture of whatever date, style or dedication goes back to something timelessly ancient and now outside India almost wholly lost, something which belongs to the past, and yet it goes forward too, though this the rationalistic mind will not easily admit, to something which will return upon us and is already beginning to return, something which belongs to the future. An Indian temple, to whatever godhead it may be built, is in its inmost reality an altar raised to the divine Self, a house of the Cosmic Spirit, an appeal and aspiration to the Infinite.”

We now proceed to the third aspect, viz, the practical and outward formulation, that is to say, the socio-political structure. Here Sri Aurobindo states,

“The sociopolitical evolution of Indian civilisation, as far as one can judge from the available records, passed through four historical stages, first the simple Aryan community, then a long period of transition in which the national life was proceeding through a considerable variety of experimental formations in political structure and synthesis, thirdly, the definite formation of the monarchical state coordinating all the complex elements of the communal life of the people into regional and imperial unities, and last the era of decline in which there was an internal arrest and stagnation and an imposition of new cultures and systems from western Asia and Europe.

“At the height of its evolution and in the great days of Indian civilisation we find an admirable political system efficient in the highest degree and very perfectly combining communal self-government with stability and order. The State carried on its work administrative, judicial, financial and protective without destroying or encroaching on the rights and free activities of the people and its constituent bodies in the same departments.

“In the person of the monarch it was the dignified and powerful head and in the system of his administration the supreme instrument—neither an arbitrary autocracy or bureaucracy, nor a machine oppressing or replacing life—of a great and stable civilisation and a free and living people.

“A greater sovereign than the king was the Dharma, the religious, ethical, social, political, juridic and customary law organically governing the life of the people. The king was only the guardian, executor and servant of the Dharma, charged to see to its observance and to prevent offences, serious irregularities and

breaches. He himself was bound the first to obey it and observe the rigorous rule it laid on his personal life and action, on the province, powers and duties of his regal authority and office.

“But there is another side of politics on which it may be said that the Indian political mind has registered nothing but failure. The organisation it developed may have been admirable for stability and effective administration and the securing of communal order and liberties and the well-being of the people under ancient conditions, but even if its many peoples were each of them separately self-governed, well governed and prosperous and the country at large assured in the steady functioning of a highly developed civilisation and culture yet that organisation failed to serve for the national and political unification of India and failed in the end to secure it against foreign invasion, the disruption of its institutions and an agelong servitude.”

“The failure to achieve Indian unity of which the invasions and the final subjection to the foreigner were the consequence arose...at once from the magnitude and from the peculiarity of the task, because the easy method of a centralised empire could not truly succeed in India, while yet it seemed the only device possible and was attempted again and again with a partial success that seemed for the time and a long time to justify it, but always with an eventual failure.”

We have observed the dominant place of religion and philosophy in Indian culture. Has this dominance not led to our decline? Have we not tended to become ascetics and ignore the world and life, the solid realities of earth?

“I do not accept the ascetic ideal as the final solution of the problem of human existence,” says Sri Aurobindo. He has also made us aware of the sad results we had to pass through owing to the exaggerated and extreme form of asceticism practised in our country at times in wide-spread areas. The extreme form is unwarranted, it is counterfeit asceticism, true asceticism is getting above the charms of external life and its restless effort and transient satisfactions.

Sri Aurobindo observes,

“There can be no great and complete culture without some element of asceticism in it; for asceticism means the self-denial and self-conquest by which man represses his lower impulses and rises to greater heights of his nature. Indian asceticism is not a mournful gospel of sorrow or a painful mortification of the flesh in morbid penance, but a noble effort towards a higher joy and an absolute possession of the spirit. A great joy of self-conquest, a still joy of inner peace and the forceful joy of a supreme self-exceeding are at the heart of its experience.”

In fact Indian philosophy has not been other-worldly. From the earliest times we have been asked to live the life here, on earth, for a hundred years. Sri Aurobindo cites the co-existence of religion and science in our country.

“To say that Indian philosophy has led away from the study of nature is to state a gross untruth and to ignore the magnificent history of Indian civilisation. If by nature is meant physical Nature, the plain truth is that no nation before the modern epoch carried scientific research so far and with such signal success as India

of ancient times. That is a truth which lies on the face of history for all to read; it has been brought forward with great force and much wealth of detail by Indian scholars and scientists of high eminence, but it was already known and acknowledged by European savants who had taken the trouble to make a comparative study in the subject.

“Not only was India in the first rank in mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, medicine, surgery, all the branches of physical knowledge which were practised in ancient times, but she was, along with the Greeks, the teacher of the Arabs from whom Europe recovered the lost habit of scientific enquiry and got the basis from which modern science started. In many directions India had the priority of discovery,—to take only two striking examples among a multitude, the decimal notation in mathematics and the perception that the earth is a moving body in astronomy, *chalā pṛthvī sthirā bhāti*, the earth moves and only appears to be still, said the Indian astronomer many centuries before Galileo. This great development would hardly have been possible in a nation whose thinkers and men of learning were led by its metaphysical tendencies to turn away from the study of nature. A remarkable feature of the Indian mind was a close attention to things of life, a disposition to observe minutely its salient facts, to systematise and to found in each department of it a science, Shastra, well-founded scheme and rule. That is at least a good beginning of the scientific tendency and not the sign of a culture capable only of unsubstantial metaphysics.”

Now, it is time to mention that Sri Aurobindo saw India as a living goddess. The ordinary conception of the nation centres round its geographical, territorial aspect. There is the passion for the land in which we dwell, ‘the land of our fathers’, ‘the land of our birth’, *country, patrie, jannabhūmi*. It is a strong emotion but it is not the same as what Sri Aurobindo saw. He says,

“It is not a piece of earth, nor a figure of speech, nor a fiction of the mind. It is a mighty Shakti, composed of the Shaktis of all the millions of units that make up the nation, just as Bhawani Mahisha Mardini sprang into being from the Shakti of all the millions of gods assembled in one mass of force and welded into unity.”

Further,

“Mother India is not a piece of earth; she is a power, a Godhead, for all nations have such a Devi supporting their separate existence and keeping it in being. Such beings are as real and more permanently real than the men they influence, but they belong to a higher plane, are part of the cosmic consciousness and being and act here on earth by shaping the human consciousness on which they exercise their influence.”

And India, according to Sri Aurobindo is a special country for God’s work. He says,

“God always keeps for himself a chosen country in which the higher knowledge is through all chances and dangers, by the few or the many, continually preserved, and for the present in this Chaturyuga at least, that country is India. Whenever he chooses to take the full pleasure of ignorance, of the dualities of strife and wrath and

tears and weakness and selfishness, the tamasic and rajasic pleasures, of the play of the Kali in short, he dims the knowledge in India and puts her down into weakness and degradation, so that she may retire into herself and not interfere with this movement of his Lila. When he wants to rise up from the mud and Narayana in man to become once again mighty and wise and blissful, then he once more pours out the knowledge on India and raises her up so that she may give the knowledge with its necessary consequences of might, wisdom and bliss to the whole world. When there is the contracted movement of knowledge, the Yogins in India withdraw from the world and practise Yoga for their own liberation and delight or for the liberation of a few disciples; but when the movement of knowledge again expands and the soul of India expands with it they come forth once more and work in the world and for the world. Yogins like Janaka, Ajatashatru and Kartavirya once more sit on the thrones of the world and govern the nations."

But obviously India is not to-day what Sri Aurobindo saw her to be in her inner being and soul. What is the reason? What is the fundamental basis on which India can rise to her glory? According to Sri Aurobindo India has to rise by her Swadharma, her own law of being. That is spirituality, that is Yoga-shakti. He says,

"One thing seems at any rate certain, that the spiritual motive will be in the future of India, as in her past, the real, originative and dominating strain. By spirituality we do not mean a remote metaphysical mind or the tendency to dream rather than to act. That was not the great India of old in her splendid daisy of vigour,—whatever certain European critics or interpreters of her culture may say,—and it will not be the India of the future. Metaphysical thinking will always, no doubt, be a strong element in her mentality, and it is to be hoped that she will never lose her great, her sovereign powers in that direction; but Indian metaphysics is as far removed from the brilliant or the profound idea-spinning of the French or the German mind as from the broad intellectual generalising on the basis of the facts of physical science which for some time did duty for philosophy in modern Europe. It has always been in its essential parts an intellectual approach to spiritual realisation. Though in later times it led too much away from life, yet that was not its original character whether in its early Vedantic intuitional forms or in those later developments of it, such as the Gita, which belong to the period of its most vigorous intellectual originality and creation. Buddhism itself, the philosophy which first really threw doubt on the value of life, did so only in its intellectual tendency; in its dynamic parts, by its ethical system and spiritual method, it gave a new set of values, a severe vigour, yet a gentler idealism to human living and was therefore powerfully creative both in the arts which interpret life and in society and politics. To realise intimately truth of spirit and to quicken and to remould life by it is the native tendency of the Indian mind, and to that it must always return in all its periods of health, greatness and vigour."

Sri Aurobindo was not an arm-chair philosopher. His is a practical spirituality, applicable to life. For the greatness of India the need is spirituality applied to all

spheres of life. We conclude with his words,

“Politics, society, economy are in the first form of human life simply an arrangement by which men collectively can live, produce, satisfy their desires, enjoy, progress in bodily, vital and mental efficiency; but the spiritual aim makes them much more than this, first, a framework of life within which man can seek for and grow into his real self and divinity, secondly, an increasing embodiment of the divine law of being in life, thirdly, a collective advance towards the light, power, peace, unity, harmony of the diviner nature of humanity which the race is trying to evolve. This and nothing more but nothing less, this in all its potentialities, is what we mean by a spiritual culture and the application of spirituality to life.”

SHYAM SUNDER JHUNJHUNWALA

SRI AUROBINDO'S COMPASSION

Portulaca grandiflora

A TINY flower from a green field,
 Its roselike heart revealed.
 But then was lost the lovely face
 As in a billowy cloud the dawning rays.

I searched amongst the impudent blades
 For that crystalline smile that never fades;
 Against my heart I held it with love,
 Vanished at once each care and crave.

O symbol of a help greater than all the gods!
 O enchanting sign from Eternity!
 Protect our earth and all true things on it,
 Encircle us with thy saviour harmony.

SHYAM KUMARI

SOME OLD LETTERS FROM BOMBAY TO AN ASHRAMITE

28. 10. 38

ALTHOUGH one may not be able to enthuse over everything that Mahatma Gandhi did, one may readily appreciate certain positive and constructive features in his role as a political leader. But your question about his literary style takes me by surprise. You report some people as saying that it is like Milton's or Dante's. Could the comparison be really serious?

First of all, how are we to compare the poetry of Milton or Dante with Gandhi's prose and that too not in the form of prose-poems? But let me ignore the difference of art-medium, cut down to essential manner and temper and see what can be said on the subject.

There may be a surface resemblance to Dante's style in that Gandhi's is not burdened with too many adjectives and is not long-winded; but all simplicities and brevities are not of the same kind. Dante has a power of clear-cut bareness or of compressed richness which comes of an intuitive glow; Gandhi's moments of forceful expression lack—even in rare phrases which we may call prose-avatars of poetry—that supreme quality of luminous form, that strong and full and piercing vision inevitably articulated. Besides, Dante wings to his summits again and again, whereas Gandhi warms up into inspiration at long intervals; so not only is the quality dissimilar but also the quantity of each one's quality differs.

Milton's *Paradise Lost* has an organ-roll entirely foreign to Gandhi's staccato movement, and even where Milton is brief and simple his pitch of language is much more powerful or much more exquisite. As for his prose-style it is the very antithesis of Gandhi's. It is complicated, with long ringing periods and an exuberance of rhetoric.

Perhaps, among poets, Wordsworth in his less climactic passages, comes close to Gandhi: he writes an easy-flowing reasoned poetry which is not far removed from the turns and rhythms of ordinary effective speech; but his verse at its height has an exaltation, a beauty of perception, a vibrant wideness held within a deep tranquillity, which you will try in vain to discover in the usually sincere and often pointed but rarely profound lucidity of our good old Mahatma.

One of the latter's most characteristic and admired *dicta* is the frequently cited "I would rather that Hinduism perished than Untouchability survived." The intention to condemn the evil of pariahdom, that has developed from the ancient division into functional castes, is indeed right-minded, and the anger against it is given a slashing impetus in the shape of a straightforward utterance which has also an epigrammatic ring. Yet the result is a ridiculous exaggeration, the ethical indignation trespasses on a region where the writer is absolutely out of his depth. A whole culture of almost unique many-sided greatness, secular no less than religious, is set at nought for the sake of a particular social blemish organically unconnected with

that culture's essence which constantly stresses the One Godhead equally within all beings and things. Both the clarity and acuity present move on a superficial plane. Surely Wordsworth at his unadorned best, either feelingful or imaginative, is beyond this type of narrow and shallow eloquence.

Take the following stanza:

Love had he found in huts where poor men lie;
His only teachers were the woods and rills,
The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

I don't believe Gandhi could ever frame such spiritually atmospheric phrases as the last two lines with their empathic insight into the Cosmic Soul and their rhythm as of an infinite inwardness. The second line would not be beyond his didactic directness as well as his sense of plain living and high thinking in a natural environment. The first might lie within the range of his sympathies, the near-cult he has made of *daridra nānāyaṇa*, God Poverty, but I very strongly doubt whether, even in a once-in-a-blue-moon moment of inspiration, he could rise to its haunting tone of quiet penetrating intensity.

Nobody can deny that Gandhi comes out with interesting and sometimes striking statements: why attempt to give him laurels which belong to the absolute masters of style and that too the style of poetry?

28. 3. 1939

It's fine to know that Sri Aurobindo is moving again—though with the help of attendants—and that most probably he'll soon be striding up and down his room as before. One of the thrilling experiences we used to have was to find him thundering with his feet overhead while we sat and meditated in the pranam hall. Such a feeling we had of inexhaustible power guarding us, that the dangers of life seemed to withdraw into a remote distance if not disappear beyond the horizons of consciousness. I hope the lion of light will be in full fighting form before I bring him my accumulated Bombay-darkness to be devoured! Of course he never does really lose his prowess but we feel him to be in full strength only when he is physically fit—it's an illusion we who live so much in our bodies can't easily escape from. It will therefore be an immense pleasure to all of you to see him at the end of April if the expected Darshan comes off. I hear that the Mother can take the decision about it only a couple of days before the 24th of that month.

4. 8. 1939

You must have learned from my letter to X that my recent illness kindled poetry in me at the odd hour of half past eleven one night. One of the results is an appeal to the descending light of the Divine. Here it is:

O Love, O Lustre,
 Downward flow—
 Now stormy, now tranquil,
 But never slow—
 For little is our time here,
 And it only grows great
 If filled by your Splendour's
 Wonderful weight!

Your burden of beauty,
 Your smiling power,
 Breaks open the secret
 Heaven of each hour—
 Your reverie presses
 Our feet of clay
 To grip forever
 Some deathless way!

Brim my whole body
 Right up to the brain,
 Till the gathering godhead
 Flows over to stain,
 With hues of rapture
 You bring from above,
 My outermost manhood—
 O Lustre, O Love!

Sounds very simple, eh? Well, it is pretty simple, but you will surely like me to go through it with you, step by step. The first four lines are very clear—in the fifth and sixth there is a piece of what may be called inspired punning which must be understood if we are to get the full significance out of them. You see, I am asking the descending love and lustre never to become slow, for the time we have in hand is brief. The word “little”, however, means not only brief but also small or wanting in greatness. This shade is picked up in the term “great” which, without violating the first implication, suggests that our life can only be rendered free of the puny human element if the divine light pours into it and fills it with its own weight of power and perfection. There is implied, in addition, the idea special to our yoga, that if the Supramental light completely fills us the frustrating brevity of human life will be replaced by a god-like existence miraculous in its magnitude.

Then the “weight” idea is picked up in the phrase “burden of beauty”, the sense of which is further illumined in “a smiling power”—words which make vivid and almost personal the meaning of divine beauty and of its transfiguring blissful

compulsion on earth. Now, what does the burden of beauty which is a smiling power do? The burden naturally is so immense that it breaks what it falls on—in this case the time-consciousness; but in breaking the time-consciousness it lays bare what is hidden within that consciousness, the eternal mystery, “the secret/Heaven of each hour”; so, instead of saying “breaks” I say “breaks open”, a phrase which is apt in connection with the words “a smiling power” also, for we speak of someone breaking into a smile, and a smile is really a breaking open of something shut. By its smile, as it were, the divine power discloses the secret that makes a heaven of earthly life. In the next stanza, the luminous disclosure is called “reverie”, and the weight-idea, the burden-theme, is still kept up: hence “Your reverie *presses*.” As soon as there is the compulsive spiritual reverie pressing from above into the physical consciousness, the body is stirred to seeking what it has visioned and our feet tread no longer the dark ignorant path of normal life but grip “Some deathless way.”

The two concluding stanzas emerge by poetic logic, from what has preceded them. We have by now the picture of the spirit’s power descending into the embodied being, right down to the feet. I appeal to this power to brim me up wholly. The brimming of anything is, as you must know, the pouring of something from top down to bottom and then the accumulation of that from bottom upwards to top. This accumulation is referred to in the line “Right up to the brain”—and when the whole embodied being is filled, there will be an overflow as from the top of a jar, and the entire outward self is washed in the divine light—the “outermost manhood” is “stained” with “the hues of rapture” that were brought from above into the inner self. Of course, “stain” which is usually a derogatory verb is used here to mean just the making of a strong visible impression in terms of colour, as in Sri Aurobindo’s

Rose of God, vermillion stain on the sapphires of heaven.

I suppose the poem is quite crystalline to you now; only, let me, in concluding, draw your attention to the felicitous function of the word “godhead” in the line “Till thy gathering godhead”. The divine overflow is from the top—it is visualised as if from the brain which is the top of the body: is not “godhead”, therefore, most apposite? The repetition, too, of the beginning of the poem, “O Love, O Lustre” in the closing “O Lustre, O Love” suggests the completeness, the entirety, of the descent that is desired, the same divinity at one end as at the other.

I may add that the reversal of the formula at the terminal end is not there just for the sake of a variation. The variation, no doubt, has a refreshing touch but the fact that the last words of the poem, “O Love”, are the same as the first ones ties up the two ends literally and establishes a perfect identity.

Perhaps the magic of the poem is somewhat dimmed when the logic of it is thus worked out to a comprehensible clarity. But I have taken the risk in order to alert you to the fact that all poetical magic has a poetical logic of its own. Only, the latter has to be intuitively grasped and need not be intellectually analysed.

21. 10. 1939

It's fine being among the hills. My room faces a long row of them and I feel very much helped: the distance between the Mother and me, instead of being more blocked by this wall of stone, appears defeated by the sense and suggestion of divinity which they concretely give my poet-vision:

Symbols of wisdom and of victory,
 O large unmoving hills,
 You bring my soul
 Not merely dark division from my Love:
 Your granite is my strength, your vastnesses my calm!

I should like to quote you two other lines which have also formed themselves in my mind. The great rocks, with their bulging contours, lie so contentedly, yet with no smug complacency; they are as if filled with a mute nobility of peace and my starving unquiet eyes find comfort in those brave purple protuberances.

No petty power of wakeful hunger knocks
 Against the dream-gorged bellies of the rocks.

18. 6. 1941

Two days back Paul Brunton arrived in Bombay from Kashmir where he had been the guest of the Mazdaznans, the American sect claiming to practise the secret wisdom of the ancient Zarathustrians. Appropriately it was founded by a man who called himself Otto Zaradusht Hanish—an impressive-faced dynamic clever leader who, to my mind, has a streak of strong personal ambition and a desire to be hailed as an illumined Guru when all that he has is a vigorous learned and organisational intellect, with a bit of "vital" magnetism. There are several such personalities in America at present. The Master, named Debbitt, of the first two Americans to join the Ashram, Vaun and Jeanette Macpheeter, was another powerful man, a more genuinely inward-looking mind but with less outward constructive force than Hanish. The true light from within and above is generally absent from all these professed gurus—the light whose one effect is that the being who is blessed with it gathers disciples without ever wanting to have them and feels always face to face with the endless more of the Infinite and the Eternal. Such a being is a Himalaya whose humility is of the highest degree.

To return to Brunton, I sent him a copy of my book, *The Secret Splendour* along with a letter; I did not ask to see him as I thought he must be overburdened with interviews. A reply came post-haste, wanting me to go over and meet him. I went, of course, and we had a very pleasant pow-wow. It was just as of old when he had come to the Ashram on a visit. He was very appreciative of my poems and promised to write a review of the book. We discussed his new views on spiritual

things—he has in the press a big volume called *The Hidden Meaning Beyond Yoga* or something like it. By Yoga he means the discipline of meditation, which results in one's remaining enclosed in one's trance or one's inner life without any active or dynamic touch upon the common world of men and women. He has evidently moved in the Aurobindonian direction, but has not yet stirred to Sri Aurobindo's vision of an utterly new world—the Supramental—to be realised here and now.

AMAL KIRAN

AN ASPIRATION

I AM a musician, one of the legions,
 Ordained to play a single note—
 Tiniest mite to the divine orchestration.
 Resounding in faithful and poignant echoes,
 It must trace a path into the very heart
 Of the all-pervading cosmic symphony.
 My new-hatched bird of a song
 Will some day find wings of magic feathers
 And fly out from known to unknown expanses—
 A pilgrim's progress to a land of resplendent beauty
 Mingled with the heart-throbs of the universal spirit.

DEBANSHU

FURTHER STUDIES IN INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY

(Continued from the issue of July 1985)

THE INTEGRAL PERSONALITY

(2)

Its Great Possibilities for Man and His Culture

SRI AUROBINDO'S view of personality is both a systematisation and an elaboration of the past Indian views on the subject and, being supported by fresh yogic exploration and experience, it acquires a great significance for the present. To Sri Aurobindo too the mind is an outer formation, produced by nature and adapted as an instrument of action on nature. The real personality is the spirit within. However, while the past Indian philosophy has regarded it as an unchanging soul, Sri Aurobindo affirms it as a fact of evolution and calls it the psychic consciousness. This psychic consciousness is, according to him, slowly growing up as a potentiality and is due for expression as an actuality in life in the normal course of things. This makes a great deal of difference so far as the previous position is concerned. The spirit is not indifferent to and detached from our normal life, but involved in it and seeking to express itself in it. This spiritual principle, which is of itself seeking expression, would naturally admit of an easier realisation or at least would be directly helpful in the transformation of existing life. Soul, as substance, detached and independent, however, is not denied, but that is affirmed as another fact of personality serving as its static basis. The psychic being is the dynamic counterpart of it. This is one capital point in Sri Aurobindo's view of personality.

Another is the relation of the unconscious, the conscious and the superconscious. Evolution, cosmic and individual, is a basic principle with Sri Aurobindo. All nature is moving up towards higher and higher levels of consciousness: out of unconscious matter has emerged life and out of subconscious and semi-conscious life has emerged the mind of man. The unconscious is, therefore, progressively becoming conscious and the conscious rising to higher degrees of consciousness, which are now superconscious to us. The whole process is determined teleologically, by a pull and attraction of the superconscious states. However, the growth of consciousness is a difficult and slow process since the unconscious offers resistance and seeks to persist in its own action. This is the principle of operation in personality, by the fact that a progressive growth of consciousness does take place and that at the higher stages of growth the attraction of the superconscious states tends to become clearer, the chief causal factor of personality are the ends and goals of the superconscious. This gives new orientation and movement and thereby accords to the 'teleological determination' and 'goal-seekingness' its full validation.

Western psychology normally does not even recognise the fact of the superconscious. A psychologist like Jung too, who has made illuminating studies of yogic practice and affirms progressive integration as almost the law of personality, contends that the "wholeness", of which admittedly the yogis are "past-masters", is reducible to the unconscious. But the unconscious, which is essentially "chaotic" in character, could not in the same breath be credited with the quality of wholeness. Besides, in an evolutionary process, if there is a past and a present, there must also be a future, unless we affirm that the process has entirely run its course. The human consciousness is, in fact, a superconscious state to that of the animal and likewise there must be states of yet higher order to the present human consciousness. The yogic discipline is able to demonstrate these in individuals and what is achieved in such cases is surely indicative of racial possibilities.

The superconscious has been the special field of exploration and mastery for Sri Aurobindo and he has identified many successive levels of it reaching up to that of the completest integration, which he has called the supermind. The significance of this work is really tremendous. It gives a new basic orientation to personality, releases new forces for the growth of human capacity and character and creates new prospects for the cultural advancement of the race as a whole.

Sri Aurobindo has also identified a further part of personality and yogically demonstrated its reality as a fact. This is what he has called the subliminal in personality. The normal personality, which plays up in interaction with the environment, is a self sharply set against a non-self. It is a finite particular in the language of philosophy. Now if an individual by a progressive self-dissociation separates himself from this finite self-hood, he may discover within himself a form of consciousness which is felt as widely continuous with others. Here we participate in the universal consciousness and then get into direct contact with other minds. This consciousness is not superconscious to our individual mind, but is of the same level and order though universal in character. Extrasensory phenomena of psychical research and parapsychology, which are causing so much perplexity, are, to Sri Aurobindo, primarily the behaviour and action of the subliminal in human personality. This part is, in some personalities, normally more active and therefore they are able to display extrasensory capacity. But it admits of cultivation as the superconscious states do.

This is a broad outline of the view of human personality, which Indian philosophy, in the person of Sri Aurobindo, has contributed to the subject. This view, by virtue of its wide comprehensiveness and due appreciation of the different aspects of personality, can truly be called the integral view of personality. It can easily accommodate within its broad scope the Western science of psychology as a most useful body of knowledge of the outer personality, of the environment-dependent mind and of the subconscious. And in doing so it will give it the larger perspective of the integral personality; in particular, the determining orientation of the superconscious. In this, the gain of the integral view too would be great. It will get annexed to it a vast body of detailed knowledge of the interrelations of the organism to the environment.

Evidently this is a possibility of a great and wide synthesis in the knowledge of human personality. A corresponding synthesis in the objective life of human culture will also go with it. And that will mean a reorientation of whole life through a reorientation of human personality.

For vividness, a spontaneous wholeness of perception, we may represent Integral Personality diagrammatically as follows:

The terms Superconscient, conscient, subconscient and inconscient are preferred by Sri Aurobindo in place of the terms Superconscious, conscious, subconscious and the unconsciousness to denote the dynamic character of the facts concerned. The Inner Being is the same thing as the subliminal behind or inside of the body, life and mind, three large concentric zones, and the True Being may be put next to the central circle, the inmost fact of the Psychic Being. It has the quality of the psychic being and therefore it is called true being. The outermost zone represents a consciousness, ordinarily not cultivated and developed, which envelopes the individual and through which environmental influences must pass to enter into it. A disease can sometimes be felt as 'coming in' though yet outside. If the envelope is awake and active the disease may be counteracted more easily while it is yet outside.

We are ordinarily conscious in a very small part of ourselves and are, therefore, not able to command the larger resources of our personality. We also look outwards and our dealings are with the environment. We have become conscious at least scientifically though not individually and also look backwards or past-wards and we also talk of tapping the unconscious, which is no doubt a real accession of strength to the personality. For the discovery of the central fact of personality, the psychic consciousness, which is the true integrating factor corresponding to Jung's 'Centre', we have to cultivate an inward look, the *Antarmukhta* of Indian philosophy. The resources that this inward look and the centre yield are revolutionary to psychology, as then consciousness and personality become self-existent and the environment-dependent consciousness an outer part of it for external adjustments. For the discovery and appreciation of the superconscious an uplook, a future-orientedness, a hope for new integrations of life has to be cultivated. This involves a progressive disassociation from dependence on the past, the unconscious, and the hard mechanism of life. This dimension of the Superconscious holds the highest and the widest resources of life, of universality and transcendence. This holds the key to the future progress of man, individually and collectively.

The integral personality is the most important basic contribution of Sri Aurobindo to psychology and thereby to human knowledge and culture as a whole. Ultimate Reality stands unknown and unknowable to most of Western philosophy. This has to be no doubt so, if the discursive mind is the only faculty available to man. But ultimate reality is not unknowable to the psychic being and the superconscious range of personality. It is most interesting how the discovery of integral personality shows the way of solving the so-called insoluble problems of philosophy.

This discovery also helps overcome partialities or limitations in other fields of knowledge and life.

It can show to science its rightful place in life as a pursuit of the laws and resources of phenomenal reality through reason, a pursuit which must be subordinated to the good of the integral man, to the overall unifying ultimate reality behind the phenomena. Science is a part of life, but without the context of the whole of reality and the whole of man, it becomes an aberration of life.

Culture is the dearest asset of man. But cultures have different qualities involving a predominant emphasis on some aspects or aspect of personality. Now integral personality raises the possibility of an integral culture of man towards which all particular cultures of human history can become valuable contributions.

Again, religions have presented to man a serious problem and the problem becomes specially acute, since each religion claims an absoluteness for itself. And there is a real truth in this position, since each experience of the Absolute would have the quality of absoluteness. But this happens to the limited finite mind of man. This limited mind gets overwhelmed by the least touch of the Absolute. But the integral personality has a much larger capacity. It can see the truth of each such perception and yet asks for an integral perception of the Absolute. What a possibility is here opened for appreciating the truth of each religion and showing the possibility of a fuller experience of God, the absolute existence.

For education the conception of integral personality is immediately indispensable, since it alone can show how integration of personality, the actual ideal of education today, is possible.

Thus integral personality is a supreme value for man and all his pursuits. But this needs the harnessing of the resources of yoga to ordinary life. Ordinary life has to be enlarged, widened, deepened, heightened. Then alone can the greater resources of life become available.

(To be continued)

INDRA SEN

DOCTOR BABU—MY GRANDFATHER

IN the month of February, the month of the Mother's birth anniversary, *Mother India* published an article in which I recounted how my grandfather was instrumental in curing the Mother. That happened in 1925. And now, in the month of August, the month of Sri Aurobindo's birth anniversary I am happy that it is publishing a new article about how my grandfather was instrumental in curing Sri Aurobindo. This happened most probably in 1930.

In 1925 Sri Aurobindo called my grandfather to cure the Mother as patient. In 1930 it was the Mother who called my grandfather to cure Sri Aurobindo. In 1925, we witnessed the giant occult powers of Sri Aurobindo and their lightning speed of action. In 1930, we shall see the Mother's tact and lightning speed in dealing with material details to effect a cure. In 1925, we saw what trust Sri Aurobindo had in my grandfather. In 1930, we shall see what trust the Mother had in him. In 1925, my grandfather cured the Mother, but came to know also the might of Sri Aurobindo. In 1930, he cured Sri Aurobindo, but came to know too the might of the Mother. And now, in 1985, sixty years later, a grandson is privileged to reveal to his readers the might of the two and the humble dedication of the third.

I cannot recollect the exact date. Either my grandfather never told me, or else I have forgotten. But as for the time in general, I am sure that it happened somewhere between January 8, 1927 and March 1934. And to this conclusion I have arrived by inference, not by recollection. I know on the authority of an elderly sadhak that Sri Aurobindo moved from Library House, (more precisely from the floor above our present reception room) to His final room (the one we now call Sri Aurobindo's room) on January 8, 1927. And since my grandfather diagnosed Him in the central corridor adjacent to His room (where we wait on birthdays before entering His room) the event could not have occurred before that year. And because my grandfather stayed in the Ashram as a doctor only up to March 1934, the incident was impossible after this month.

Since I know that some of my readers will be aggrieved over my vagueness with data, I feel I owe them an explanation. First of all, I never asked my grandfather anything with the mind of a biographer. Thus I didn't jot down such prosaic details as dates in the manner of a meticulous historian. Secondly, my grandfather didn't care for these things himself. He would either be vague with them or remain silent when asked about them. But the reason for these lapses lies in the predilections of my grandfather and my own predilections too. Let me explain.

The lunch hours would often be the ideal time for asking him a question or two. But every day is not a Sunday, and every lunch hour is not the right hour. I would have to feel for the right moment. Sometimes for days, sometimes for weeks, sometimes even for months, the right hour would be absent. And then, one day, when I was least expecting it, the day would be right and the moment would be ripe and I would know that I would get what I wanted. Thus I would put to him a question

that had been clearly formulated in my mind long back. We would sit on the floor for lunch, and our plates would be placed on a low bench covered with white linen. He would sit with his characteristic poise and nobility, and we two brothers would sit on either side of him. A white apron would be tied to his neck hiding his long silver beard and his big abdomen. He would listen to my question but not answer at once. My question, I knew, had set him in a profound mood of recollection. He would look down steadily at his plate, maybe pick up a grain of rice from the apron covering his abdomen, and then, before taking up the next spoonful, speak. He never spoke more than a sentence or two at a time, but the impact would be tremendous. The words would be charged with such punch and gravity that I could feel, indeed almost see, Sri Aurobindo pacing up and down the corridor outside his room. For me it would be more than the corridor we see on our birthdays. It would be a long stretch of endless vista that would be bathed in a sparkling blue light like a massive chunk of a glowing crystal. And bathed in that light I would see my grandfather, silent and immaculate in look due to the compassion and Himalayan poise of the Master. And the Mother? Yes, I would see Her too, witnessing the Guru and His humble disciple-doctor in action.

On other days grandfather's words would not be filled with powerful overtones, but with an undertone of respect and adoration for the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. On these days such feelings would course through his words that our lunch room hardly seemed like a lunch room any more. The whole area would be so filled with an air of reverence and holy silence that no sound, however jarring, would appear jarring to us; it would rather enhance the profundity of the stillness. In the kitchen annexe my grandmother would pour ladies-fingers into a cauldron of boiling oil for frying because she wanted to serve them hot. Soon she would enter the room with a dish in her hand. Feeling the atmosphere, her face would glow with a smile of deep happiness as she would pass the three of us one by one, pouring the still fizzing contents onto our plates. Then, without a word, she would sit down with her back against the wall to inhale the sweetness of the air. Our cat, Bhajahari, would fold himself into a lump, tuck his tail neatly by his side, and look at us suspiciously. Veteran thieves look upon sages as nuts. It is likely that on these days Bhajahari looked upon us as nuts completely cracked.

Well, my predilections made me seek this atmosphere, not dates and other data.

On other days my grandfather would go to the terrace to see the sun set. My readers will recollect that dusk and my grandfather had a special affinity. At these times, when the day's work was done and the birds were returning to their nests, I do not know what Spirits he would commune with. I never asked him that. But often his face would take on a deep red colour and then I would be in doubt; for I would not know whether his flushed face was a reflection of the emotion of his depths or merely the reflection of the western sky gaily painted with orange and vermilion. These were trying moments for me. On the one hand I didn't feel like

disturbing him with questions; it would be selfish of me to put them. On the other I didn't want to miss these opportunities to soak my being in the vision of yore. Indeed who can resist the temptation of collecting nectar when by nectar one grows in health?

On these "sunset" days, except for him and me, our house would usually be empty—everyone would be away at the Playground. At times I would pace up and down on the terrace, at others I would bring a mat, unroll it, and wait patiently.

After 1958, when the Mother stopped going to the Playground, my mother and grandmother would often join us. And, of course, on some of these days our cups would get filled to overflowing, as question after question would pour forth from my mother, grandmother and me, long after the sun had set; and at last we would know that to ask any more would be to go beyond the pure thirst for knowledge into mere intellectual prattlings. Then we would roll up our mats and leave the velvet night to the terrace and enter our rooms from where the yellow electric light would look so warm and inviting. A honey-cool breeze would tug at the tender shoot of my grandmother's creeper hanging from the rotting wooden shade. The lizard of the terrace would send out its raucous chick...chick...chick...perhaps in appreciation of the moon and the night. And for hours thereafter, I would spend my time in golden reverie.

Now let me share with my readers the precious facts I have collected.

One day a messenger informed my grandfather that the Mother wanted to see him. The message was clear: the doctor was to go straight up the meditation hall staircase. The Mother would be waiting for him at the landing. The messenger was simple and innocent; little could my grandfather know from him about the seriousness of the call. But with his doctor's instinct he knew the water was running deep. When the Mother means business, why any doctor, even a fool, ought to know that the air is vibrant with implications other than what meets the eye.

In an emergency call a doctor feels at ease if the messenger can give him some hints about the nature of the call. Even a single sentence of accurate information helps him to reach the spot in a prepared frame of mind. But this time the caller was mum and my grandfather was a worried man. He couldn't even decide whether to take his stethoscope with him or not. He left in a hurry. He didn't realise then that he had nothing to worry about. For, he was going to doctor the supreme Doctor Himself and none other than the Divine Mother would be his guide.

(To be continued)

TARUN BANERJEE

HOW FAR IS PONDICHERRY?

It was August 1979. 141 UP just left Kharagpur—a Junction Station in the S. E. Railway in West Bengal. It had left Howrah about 3 hours before. During this period the gentleman—my copassenger—sitting in front of me remained silent. He had been arranging his bags and other personal effects, making the berth ready for the night and then looking outside. It seemed that he was thinking of something very deeply.

When the train began to move, he suddenly asked me, 'How far are you going? Madras proper? or elsewhere?'

I replied with a smile, 'I'm going to Pondicherry.'

He asked, 'Are you staying there?'

'No, Sir!' was my reply. 'Occasionally I visit and stay there for a few days and then come back.'

With a sigh he said, 'I'm so unfortunate—I haven't seen Pondicherry as yet. Often I wished to do so, but at the last moment circumstances stood in the way.'

For a few seconds both of us could not speak. Then abruptly he asked, 'Sir, may I ask you a question?'

I eagerly looked at him and at once with a low voice he said, 'If you don't mind—how far is Pondicherry?'

I was somewhat puzzled and could not reply at once. After a few minutes I humbly said, 'Excuse me, I can't follow you. Are you asking how much time it'll take to reach Pondicherry from Madras—or the distance?'

He laughed aloud and said, 'No, Sir, I'm not asking anything about the time and distance. That arithmetic I finished long ago in my school days. And thereafter I didn't need it. I was asking something else.'

Perhaps I was not hearing him properly. When he stopped I once again asked him, 'Will you go by train from Madras or by bus? The train is very slow; and you have to pass one night more. But the bus will take not more than four hours.'

Now the gentleman appeared to be a little bit at ease. Promptly he replied, 'I don't need all this information, Sir. I should like to know from you: How far is Pondicherry?'

I looked at him helplessly.

He exclaimed, 'I'm so sorry that you can't follow me. Let me be more explicit. Perhaps you admit that Pondicherry means and includes the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. And Sri Aurobindo means, after all, "The Life Divine", which you cannot deny. So I wish to know: How far is the "Life Divine"?''

I was stunned but for a few moments only. Soon I reiterated, 'Here also my question stands—which vehicle will you take? Slow-moving vehicle of Evolution or conveyance of speedy and revolutionary progress which is known as Yoga? What is your choice?'

The gentleman remained silent for a while, then after cleansing the lenses of his spectacles he said, 'We are to travel a long way. Hope that during this long time

I shall learn lots of things from you. So let me now ask what I actually intend to know. What do you say?’

‘You may safely ask; but I am not sure whether I’ll be able to give the right answer.’

He said with some confidence, ‘I was hesitating because, you know, there are many questions which cannot be put to anyone who is not very well known to the questioner.’

I nodded in affirmation and looked with eager eyes at him for his question.

He asked in a low voice, ‘Is Pondicherry far from Moscow or Peking? I do not use the word “Beijing” because I haven’t yet become familiar with it.’

I was at my wits’ end. I could not understand why he asked such a serious question in a jolting railway compartment. I was not ready for it. I looked at the gentle man. Apparently he was above sixty. His health was sound. He looked very wise yet amiable, as also very witty and funny. He had the capacity of both making and taking jokes and therefore it was not difficult for him to put such a serious question in a light-coloured garb of amusement. Or was he mocking? Perhaps he thought me to be well conversant with Pondicherry and I would be able to answer any question.

Seeing me brooding over his question he became somewhat apologetic and said, ‘You need not give the answer just now; but give it when convenient before we reach Madras.’

I felt enthused and said, ‘I’m so happy to have your company. The long journey, I suppose, will be very interesting and enjoyable.’

‘That is not certain,’ he promptly retorted. ‘How can you precisely say that my company will give you pleasure all along? But I am sure that the question I put, however difficult it may seem at present, will be very interesting when dealt with provided I’m not in any way misunderstood. It is not that I’m asking this question for the first time, nor are you the first person. Several other persons were also asked before you. But they somehow managed to avoid answering; and I didn’t press them. But maybe the time has come for the question to be rightly answered. For if Pondicherry is proved to be far—and far away from either Moscow or Peking—then nobody will take the trouble to travel so long a way. All will move towards Moscow or Peking and as a matter of fact they have already started running towards one or the other. So it is necessary to make them realise not the distance but the true meaning of what they are striving to achieve or, in other words, they must know whether they will be able to find their God at the end of their pilgrimage!’

With a smile I asked, ‘Will it be sufficient to convince them?’

The gentleman replied, ‘The aim of Pondicherry may differ from that of either Moscow or Peking but so far as my study goes it is a capital event, to use Sri Aurobindo’s terms, that the people are endeavouring to move towards Moscow and Peking, for this is a necessary stage before they incline to turn towards Pondicherry. What do you say?’

I asked with utter astonishment, ‘Where has it been said by Sri Aurobindo that

people's movement towards Moscow and Peking is a capital event?'

Once again the gentleman laughed aloud and said, 'No, no, that he never did say. I remembered him because I used the words *'capital event'*. He commented thus when he discussed the formation of the League of Nations in *The Ideal of Human Unity*. With these words he appreciated people's endeavour to set up the League. However, what I mean to say is that people's attempt to achieve the one will later induce them to realise the other; whether I am right or wrong is what exactly I want to know. Hence I put the question, How far is Pondicherry?'

I humbly said, 'I know that there is a book entitled *Moscow Vs Pondicherry*—perhaps satirically written by a Bengali author—Sibaram Chakrabarty—who is no more. I suppose that you might have gone through it and got annoyed.'

Once again the gentleman laughed like a child and said, 'Whenever I proposed to discuss the question with anybody the same counter-question is raised whether I felt disturbed by that book. As a matter of fact I have not seen that book as yet, though I've heard its name. Of course I must read it when I get a copy.'

I withdrew what I had commented and said, 'May I ask why you try to link Moscow-Peking with Pondicherry?'

He at once replied, 'Because the majority of minds are leaning to that side, so I wish to suppose that such a big world-event cannot happen independently of Pondicherry. Pondicherry has encompassed everything. Nothing of this world has been left aside. Integrality is its salient characteristic. So I thought, may be wishfully, that people's movement towards Moscow-Peking is a stage which cannot be brushed aside, but has to be accepted with a view to discovering the inherent truth of the movement.'

My remaining silent over his thought-provoking proposition might have stimulated him and he continued, 'You may argue that on the basis of one ideal there is spirituality while on the basis of the other there is materialism going by physical science, and then conclude that only the stupid can hope that the materialists may become spiritualists and turn towards Pondicherry without achieving their long-cherished mission that Moscow-Peking have so long been upholding.'

I sharply replied, 'No, Sir, I have no intention to raise such points.'

In a calm tone and more politely he said, 'I didn't mean you personally; but I know very well that there are persons who argue like that. But my view, you know, is something different. I firmly believe that it is not the intention of Pondicherry that man must learn to accept spiritualism without having any idea of matter. This issue was very nicely dealt with in the 2nd and 3rd Chapters (Book I) of *The Life Divine* under one title "The Two Negations". You may examine what was indicated in the concluding lines of the second negation, "The Refusal of the Ascetic." I can quote them from memory, if you don't mind:

"....We shall preserve the truth of material science and its real utilities in the final harmony...."

'The chapter on "Matter", the 24th Chapter in Book I, may also be recollected

here. I think we must seriously consider why Sri Aurobindo discussed the issue relating to Matter and Materialism so elaborately not only in *The Life Divine* but also in other small books like *Man—Slave or Free*, *Evolution*, etc., if materialism had no relation, whatsoever, to Spiritualism? I am sure that you have gone through those small books and realised how useful and valuable they are at the present moment. Hence I want to discuss these subjects with you so that I may get some more light from you on the issues which I hope will be of much help to me in conducting our next monthly study class when I may be able to give some concrete views.'

I couldn't help asking him, 'Are you a Professor, Sir?'

With a smile he nodded and informed me that in the next year he would retire. He further stated, 'Sometimes I think myself very fortunate to have the company of students continually for so many years. Though psychology is not my subject, still I attempt entering into their minds to know them fully. I believe, nay, I'm confident that they have no apathy or aversion towards Pondicherry. They are of the opinion that Pondicherry is too difficult, and does not lend itself to discussion like any other subject. The other day, while I was talking with a student, he felt very much inspired to inform me...' Saying this the Professor looked at me for a few seconds with his eyes extraordinarily bright and joyous and then continued, 'The boy told me: "Sir! a few days back when I was reading an article published in a periodical, I came across a quotation. Its idea is so ecstatic and illuminating and expressed in so sweet and melodious a rhythm that I did not only copy it in my notebook, but also stored it in my memory," and then he began chanting the quotation with a voice that seemed to me something celestial:

"Nature shall wake to manifest secret God,
The Spirit shall take up the human play,
This earthly life become the life divine."

After the recital he looked so bright and blissful that I was simply amazed. He told me in an enchanting tone, "Sir, I don't know whether you believe it or not, but it is a fact that while I was reading the lines I completely lost myself. It seemed to me that I was talking in the hermitages of ancient India where several Rishis were chanting hymns from the Upanishads and their melodious voices entered my ears through the words of that quotation. The words 'the life divine', believe me, Sir, sounded as if they were a Sanskrit verse and not English words. It also seemed to me that those words were coming from a deep and far-off source—like a fountain with its rhythmic notation. I thought that the secret message which the two words had been carrying for humankind would surely reveal itself one day and that this fact was also implicit in those two words."

The Professor paused for a while, then continued, 'I enquired of the boy whether he had read *The Life Divine* and the boy promptly replied, "No, Sir, the time is not yet ripe."

'Bewildered I looked at him when silently he took leave of me. So I'm very optimistic about the youngsters,' the Professor concluded.

The report of the dialogue between the Professor and one of his students was so nicely depicted that I felt very much roused and I at once said, 'It'll be very nice if you can manage to come to Pondicherry with some of your students before your retirement.'

He remained silent for a space, then calmly stated that he was also eagerly waiting for that auspicious occasion. He wished that the proposal should come from the students when he would gladly respond. He also indicated that that was one of the reasons for his not visiting Pondicherry as yet.

'Now let us come to our original points of discussion', the Professor drew my attention.

'Yes, you please start,' I replied.

With a sigh the Professor started, 'I believe that it is a blunder to work out a philosophy based only on inference. Unfortunately we did so; without knowing fully well what matter is and how it was created, we have worked out a Materialistic philosophy on the basis of some surface information provided by physical science. Though physical science has not yet uttered its conclusive opinion about Matter, still many of the doctrines which have come out of the inferential philosophy are stated to be scientific and taken up by the human mind as a panacea for all human maladies. So more and more people are becoming interested in applying them in their social, political and economic life. According to this materialistic philosophy, which, I must say, is based on a wrong or rather misguiding conception of matter, mind is taken as a dependent and subsequent operation of matter. As a result of this irresponsible conclusion man's actualities are considered to be the fundamental basis on which his psychological superstructure is founded. His potentialities are also considered to be dependent on outer phenomena. Here lies the root cause of the ancient quarrel between—Materialism and Spiritualism.'

I said in a sober tone, 'It is a fact that the majority of people do not bother whether the philosophy is based on a wrong conception. They have no time to think seriously over all these deeper things. They believe that the doctrines that have resulted from the philosophy are what you just called them, the panacea for all their maladies. So they are after it. If you forbid them, they will pay no heed. So I think the time has come to make them aware of the root cause of the disease which society is suffering from and then they may be able to decide what the correct medicine should be to cure the disease and how and from where it has to be acquired.'

The Professor with much pleasure appreciated my views and said, 'Yes, you are right. They may abhor Pondicherry, but Pondicherry is there to embrace all and that is why it is so brilliant. Let them, of their own accord, endeavour to realise this unique role of Pondicherry in showing humanity the real way that leads to its splendid destiny.'

Suddenly the lights of the compartment were on and at once we realised that

we were travelling in a Railway 2nd class 3-tier compartment and the train was moving towards Bhubaneswar, the capital city of Orissa. We also saw that there were other passengers too and they were four in number sitting just by our sides; of them two were ladies. We were six in all—six owners of six sleeping berths. But we were not at all aware of the fact that they had been listening to our discussion very attentively.

The Professor left for the toilet and soon returned and took his seat. Then he brought out an incense stick from his hand-bag, lit it and started meditating with the burning stick in his hand. It was just evening.

(To be continued)

SAMAR BASU

IDEAL CHILD

Dear Friends,

Prayer of The Students

“Make of us the hero warriors we aspire to become. May we fight successfully the great battle of the future that is to be born against the past that seeks to endure; so that the new things may manifest and we be ready to receive them.”

THE MOTHER

(From the booklet *Ideal Child*)

IDEAL CHILD

Wishes to reach each and every youth in the International Youth Year 1985. In the life of the spirit every man and woman is a child.

This small booklet containing the Mother's inspiring words will be of immense value to the young men and women, igniting in them a flame of noble aspirations and ideals which alone can counteract the inborn inertia in man. Even if out of thousands of young boys and girls only a few catch the spark it is enough, for it is always a minority, the elite, which leads and acts as a leaven in society.

We know that it is only a minority which will be inspired by these words, but in the others a luminous seed will be sown which will germinate in the subconscious, eventually grow into a fully developed tree providing beacons of light to the whole society.

Shri Sundaram's message to the Baroda Conference for "Ideal Child" on 20-7-52 went thus:

“I leave it to you to feel the Mother's direct inspiration for the way in which to work for the spread of Her message. The presence of the Mother will help you because Her Divine Consciousness is always there in a subtle way to help us when we call for it. It awakes within us, it inspires us, it leads us, it gives us light and strength. Thus we have with us the highest and greatest support available to man. The work which you are going to take up has been blessed by The Mother. Any doubt and despair you may feel in your heart must be rejected, and you must advance with the faith and the confidence that She for whom you are working will take care of the work.”

He ended his message by saying “Let this book reach every child”, emphasising the words “every child”. In the province of Gujarat, Committees were formed district-wise to carry forward the project of “Ideal Child”. They were to spread its message, and as specially directed by the Mother reach at least one lakh children by 21/2/53. This booklet is a message given by the Mother, a small but powerful message of the Supreme Consciousness. Thus when you give this little invaluable book to a child, you are actually giving him something of the Supreme Consciousness. In the beginning the child may not understand everything written there but with the passage of time he will grow and then this message will flash across his soul, and the

light, for which he has been waiting for many lives perhaps. will illuminate his consciousness and show him the aim of life and the way to achieve it. In short, this is the seed-word or Mantra of The Mother for the New Creation. And not only the child but the person who is instrumental in spreading this message will also feel his consciousness uplifted.”

In 1978, the Mother's Centenary year, the project of 'Ideal Child' was revived and today about 1.5 million copies printed in twenty languages have been distributed to children all over the world. Orders and letters for the same have been received from almost all the States of India, and from many other countries such as Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malayasia, Fiji Islands, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Cyprus, Denmark, Sweden, Soviet Russia, Kenya, Liberia, Senegal, Australia, U.S.A., Argentina, Mexico, Cuba, Columbia, Peru, Panama, Bolivia, Jamaica, Dubai, Jordan, Kuwait, etc.

The world organisations such as the United Nations, Rotary International, Jaycees International, Universal Children's Garden, Unity in Diversity Council, have also participated in this endeavour.

It has been printed in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Flemish, Gujarati, Hindi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Marathi, Urdu, Panjabi, Bengali, Oriya, Assamese, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Kannada, and it is being translated into still other languages.

It is hoped that by Divine Grace children all over the world will get a copy of this book. We invite all those who aspire for a new world of Joy, Peace, Harmony, Brotherhood, Sportsmanship and Equality to collaborate in this endeavour by way of translation-work or by way of financial help for printing and distribution.

Any advice regarding translation and distribution to the children is welcome.

We invite your sincere efforts towards this work and your help in seeing that this booklet reaches every child in your circle.

The contribution for one thousand copies in any Indian language is Rs. 400/- only and Rs. 1200/- or \$ 120/- for despatch by surface mail outside India. The receipt for contribution carries tax benefit to the donors. The cost of a single copy in India is 50 p, postage 25 p extra.

Bank drafts, cheques, etc., should be made payable to Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry (outside India, in U. S. Dollars). All correspondence should be addressed to KESHAVJI, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002.

A line in reply will be appreciated.

With my best wishes,

Yours sincerely,
KESHAVJI

“The world is preparing for a big change. Will you help?”

THE MOTHER

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE TRADITIONAL SANKHYA

(Continued from the issue of July 1985)

Sri Aurobindo on the Sankhya

SRI AUROBINDO gives an account of the various positions of the Sankhya concerning the metaphysical idea of Purusha-Prakriti in his philosophical treatise, *The Life Divine*, and concludes thus:

All these positions of the Sankhya we find to be perfectly valid in experience when we come into direct inner contact with the realities of individual soul and universal Nature; but they are pragmatic truths and we are not bound to accept them as the whole or the fundamental truth either of self or of Nature.¹

In Sri Aurobindo's view the Sankhya with its dualism and pluralism is inadequate to serve the purpose he has in view. The ideas of Purusha and Prakriti have to be enlarged and redefined, and Sri Aurobindo proceeds to work on the Sankhya in the light of the perceptions of the Vedanta.

He relies on the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* (4-5, 6, 7) when he modifies the many independent Purushas of the Sankhya into a multiple becoming of one Purusha. The Upanishad speaks of two Purushas which are also described as two birds, *dvā suparnā*; one is the Purusha in Nature enjoying her cosmos and the other the Purusha aloof from Nature. Though the Upanishad speaks of the two as if they were two different entities, it clearly "indicates that the two are the same, represent different states, bound and liberated, of the same conscious being",² for it says that the second one has withdrawn from Nature having descended into the enjoyment of her world, *jahātyenām bhukta bhogām ajo anyah* (4-5.) In another verse the Upanishad goes on to add that the second Purusha who is above Nature is the Lord, *anyam īsam* (4-7). It is therefore clear that the conscious being as the witness Purusha is the Lord, while as the Purusha involved in the world it has descended into "the multiplicity of the creatures of Prakriti". In other words the many souls identified with the forms of Prakriti are the multiple becomings of one Purusha who is the Lord. Thus immobile unity and multiple becoming are but two aspects of a single principle. After modifying the many independent Purushas into the one Purusha becoming the many, Sri Aurobindo transforms the independent Prakriti of the gunas into "the will and the executive power of the Purusha."³ He draws our attention to the Gita which says that Prakriti belongs to the Lord (7-5).

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, (1972), p. 349.

² *Essays on the Gita*, p. 72.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

The Gita further says that the Prakriti of the gunas is a lower formation of a higher Prakriti which is the original creative power of the Lord and that this higher Prakriti becomes the Jiva (the multiple Purusha). In the Gita's view, "Purusha by *his* Prakriti is the cause of the cosmos."¹ It is not Purusha *and* Prakriti that are the cause. Thus the Gita explains that Prakriti is not only dependent on Purusha but becomes the original creative power through which He becomes many Purushas.

In this process of redefining and enlarging the ideas of Purusha and Prakriti the dualism and the pluralism of the Sankhya have given way to a monistic view which reflects the spirit and substance of the Vedanta. While Purusha becomes indistinguishable from the Brahman of the Upanishads, Prakriti merges with the creative power of Brahman, Maya.

The order and purpose of manifestation of the world, as outlined by the Sankhya, will no longer be valid and, therefore, have to change in accordance with the larger view of Spirit and Nature. In the view of the Sankhya, when the world comes out of Prakriti, it contains the whole hierarchy of forms as an eternally accomplished order. What remains to be accomplished is the evolution of the soul from grade to higher grade till it finds itself in the human form so that it can return to its original purity by putting an end to its long association with material nature. From the larger point of view of Sri Aurobindo, the hierarchy of forms is not at all an eternally accomplished order; nor is the alienation of the soul from the world the true significance of the manifestation of the world.

In Sri Aurobindo's view, when the world appears out of Prakriti the first to appear are organised material forms. "The history of the earth," says he, "is first an evolution of organised forms by the working of material forces."² Through a process of evolution living Matter out of inert Matter, thinking Matter out of living Matter successively came into existence. Therefore the hierarchy of forms was worked out by a process of evolution subsequent to the manifestation of this world. Sri Aurobindo refers to the *Aitereya Upanishad*(1-1-2, 3) in which a parable of creation occurs. When the Spirit produced animal kinds like the cow and horse, the gods found them unsuitable. And when the Spirit finally created the human form, they found it excellent and suitable and entered into it. Commenting on it, Sri Aurobindo observes: "This is a clear parable of the creation of more and more developed forms till one was found that was capable of housing a developed consciousness."³ It is necessary to note here a significant reference in the *Katha Upanishad* to the making of one form in various ways by the Lord, *ekam rūpam bahudhā yah karoti* (2-2-12). Sri Aurobindo says that form-evolution is likely to continue and create another superior form so as to accommodate the emerging Spirit in an appropriate body. This body will evolve out of the present human body and establish itself as the highest in the hierarchy of forms upon earth.

¹ *Ibid.*

² Sri Aurobindo, *The Hour of God* (1972), p. 14.

³ *The Life Divine*, p. 835.

Parallel to the order of form-evolution there is also an evolution of the involved consciousness in form, ascending from grade to higher grade. Just as the emergence of Mind in Life transformed the animal into the human body, so also the appearance of the Spirit in Mind will transform the human into the divine body. This will be an inevitable outcome, because the world was created for the purpose of "an evolutionary self-building of Spirit on a base of Matter."

The appearance of the Spirit leading to the evolution of a divine body upon earth will mark the establishment of the kingdom of God "not only within us but outside, in a collective human life",¹ and fulfil the agelong dream of our race.

The Philosophical Significance of the Modern Aspirations

One of the important functions of a new system of philosophy is to find a proper place for the growing aspirations of its age in the scheme of the world and unfold their true significance by going beyond their local circumstances and incidental distortions. Sri Aurobindo has taken into account the four important aspirations of his age,—the affirmation of the earthly life as the field of realisation, a complete mastery over the forces of Nature, a comprehensive application of the law of evolutionary development to all cases of upward change, a social orientation of the individual achievements,—and brought out their inner significance in the light of his metaphysics.

1. The idea of a divine life, a life of freedom and harmony, is perhaps as old as humanity. But the inertness of Matter with its brute and inconscient force, its mechanical law of endless divisions and oppositions is found to be a monstrous obstruction in realising the idea upon earth. As a result, the body is considered to be "the soul's great difficulty, its continual stumbling block and rock of offence." All voices in India "are joined in one great consensus that not in this world of the dualities can there be our kingdom of heaven, but beyond." But in Sri Aurobindo's view this revolt against Matter is rather due to a hasty decision and a lack of determination to understand the real significance of the problem. "The obstacle which the physical presents to the spiritual," says Sri Aurobindo, "is no argument for the rejection of the physical; for in the unseen providence of things our greatest difficulties are our best opportunities."² It is necessary to remember here the sayings of the Upanishads: the *Mundaka* says that Earth lies at His feet, *padbhyām prithivī* (2-1-4); the *Brihadaranyaka* speaks of the Earth as His footing, *prithivī pā-jasyam* (1-1-1). Commenting on this idea, Sri Aurobindo writes:

The touch of Earth is always reinvigorating to the son of Earth, even when he seeks a supraphysical Knowledge. It may even be said that the supraphysical

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 846.

² Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1972), p. 7.

can only be really mastered in its fulness—to its heights we can always reach—when we keep our feet firmly on the physical.¹

Another consideration, perhaps the most important, is that if the purpose of creation is for the delight of self-building of the Spirit on a base of Matter, then the establishment of a divine life upon earth must be inevitable.

2. The desire to conquer suffering, eliminate the limitations of mind, life, and body, establish a law of harmony in all our activities and relations to the world has prompted our ancients to study and analyse the constitution of the body, discover the causes of suffering and limitation, and offer ways and means to remove those causes. According to them the body as a product of Nature is subject to endless strife of the gunas; since all limitations and miseries originate from this ceaseless strife, a life of harmony and happiness is impossible without changing the gunas themselves. Since Nature is an original substance, so they thought, there is no way to change it. The solution which suggested itself to them was to recoil from Nature by giving up the embodied existence. The principle is: “if you cannot meet your enemies in their camp, at least do not allow any scope for them to launch an attack upon you.” On ceasing to be identified with Nature and its cause of suffering, man becomes a self-conqueror rather than a world-conqueror. This is only a partial victory, because Nature still remains unconquered. In Sri Aurobindo’s view, the Nature of the gunas is not an original substance but a lower formation of a higher divine Nature, *parā prakṛti* (the Gita: 7-5). Therefore it is not impossible to change the material Nature and bring forward the divine Nature in which the gunas and their strife are replaced by their real counterparts. To quote Sri Aurobindo:

The strife of the gunas is only a representation in the imperfection of the lower nature; what the three gunas stand for are three essential powers of the Divine which are not merely existent in a perfect equilibrium of quietude, but unified in a perfect consensus of divine action.²

Tamas becomes a divine calm capable of basing enormous activity, rajas a self-effecting will of the divine power, and sattva a self-existing light of the divine being. When the gunas and their strife disappear into their divine counterparts all limitations and sufferings fall away from man. He is not just a self-conqueror but a world-conqueror as well. The possibility of a complete conquest of Nature imposes itself on man because he embodies in himself a soul which is the becoming of the Spirit (the Gita:7-5). The Spirit is not only above Nature but master of Nature. Therefore when the soul rises into the Spirit, it must be capable of the same mastery. It must be capable of controlling its own nature as well as its environment and the world. “Man’s urge of self-perfection,” says Sri Aurobindo, “is to be, in the ancient

¹ *The Life Divine*, p. 11.

² *The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 661-62.

language, *svarāṭ* and *samrāṭ*, self-ruler and king.”¹

3. When the divine soul emerges in man, he is confronted with a dichotomous division of his being, an inner being of light and consciousness and an outer being of obscurity and ignorance. He feels the opposition of his birth and life to the consciousness of the Spirit. He is convinced of their inherent incompatibility and escapes the conflict by turning away from the outer being and retreating into the Spirit.

Evolutionary Nature does not favour an exclusive development of consciousness because its aim is to work out a perfect harmony between the inner consciousness and the outer form. When Life appeared in inert Matter, Nature resolved the conflict between the vital soul and the material form by vitalising the material into the living body. In the same way, when Mind appeared in living Matter, the conflict between the mental soul and the animal form was resolved by mentalising the animal into the human body. On the basis of the past evolution we must suppose that when the Spirit appears in thinking Matter, the conflict between the divine soul and the human form will be solved by transforming the human into the divine body. In other words, the parallel evolution of self and form in the past will repeat itself in the future also. With the appearance of a divine body the divine self will become a permanent feature of earth nature. And this will be in fulfilment of the law of evolutionary development.

Sri Aurobindo agrees that an exclusive development of the spiritual consciousness may be necessary in the beginning as it helps to establish the supremacy of the Spirit in man. But he does not think that it is the real aim of the Spirit in earthly manifestation. Its aim is to develop an appropriate body for its manifestation and through that establish itself as an integral part of earth nature. Therefore the embodied life must be used not only to discover the Spirit but to provide a suitable abode for its manifestation by changing the very physical into a divine body. Anything other than this is not in harmony with God’s aim in earthly manifestation. Sri Aurobindo writes,

If the Indian saying is true that the body is the instrument provided for the fulfilment of the right law of our nature, then any final recoil from the physical life must be a turning away from the completeness of the divine Wisdom and a renunciation of its aim in earthly manifestation.²

4. Generally speaking, individual salvation has been the highest aim of spiritual seeking in our country. For pluralism the souls are entirely distinct from one another, whereas for the monism which considers the soul to be nothing but the absolute Spirit the soul’s perception of other individuals is an illusion. Therefore in both cases liberation is only an individual issue. Further, they insist that since embodied life is due to an inexplicable fall of the soul into Matter, liberation is not only free-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 674.

Ibid., p. 7.

dom from false identification with the body but complete withdrawal from embodied life as well. But for Sri Aurobindo individual liberation is not an end in itself, but only a means to emancipate the divine consciousness in the collective existence and establish a divine life upon earth.

We say that the world is a manifestation of the Spirit. It means that the Spirit has manifested itself in two forms, the individual and the collective. If its aim in earthly manifestation is self-building on a base of Matter, then the fulfilment of this aim depends not only on the individual but on the collective too. The emergence of the Spirit in man liberates him from his ego and its limitations and raises his instrumental nature—mind, life and body—to a higher level of perfection so that he becomes an instrument of divine action in the world. The individual realises his oneness with the entire world not only in the soul but also in the instrumental nature, and willingly gives himself to the service of the Spirit in others, so that the kingdom of God may be established in the collective human life.

Sri Aurobindo is opposed to the idea of individual liberation as an exclusive aim for two reasons. First of all, it supports egoism in a veiled form instead of eliminating it completely. Secondly, it insists on putting an end to the embodied life of the individual and withdrawing the soul from the world without any consideration for the suffering humanity and its redemption. Protesting against this idea, Sri Aurobindo writes:

- 1) The desire for personal salvation, however high its form, is an outcome of ego; it rests on the idea of our own individuality and its desire for its personal good or welfare.¹
- 2) If his inexorable removal through the very act of illumination is the law, then the world is condemned to remain eternally the scene of unredeemed darkness, death and suffering.²

His opposition is inevitable; since all are one Spirit and bound by oneness and mutuality, the liberated soul cannot be indifferent to the suffering of others and must admit that the deliverance of others is as urgent and necessary as its own deliverance.³

(Concluded)

N. JAYASHANMUKHAM

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

² *The Life Divine*, p. 38.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 406.

EUROPE 1974

A Travelogue

(Continued from the issue of July 1985)

BETWEEN the latitudes 52 and 54 England could cater for almost all tastes. If you are industrial-minded and want to see British industry, there are such towns as Manchester, Coventry, and Leeds which was once the greatest woollen cloth centre in the world. There are also Sheffield, York, Lancaster, Lancashire, Nottingham, Birmingham, etc. If you are literary-minded there are Oxford and Cambridge and all their colleges and wonderful Libraries. Also, Stratford-on Avon, Shakespeare's birth-place. If you want to wander through vales and meadows and see the small English towns and villages and taste typical English food the area indicated is the best. And of course there are innumerable Cathedrals and noble houses to visit.

The best way to see this place is to hire a car, buy some very good maps and have a lengthy conversation with the manager of any of the tourist centres before you start. Have your licence approved by the authorities and just go away to Huntingdon and Sherwood Forest and remember the escapades of Robin Hood. There are in England some 800 noble houses and castles open to viewing by the public. Naturally it is impossible to do all the 800 for any type of tourist. But tourist centres will point out 7 and say if you have seen all these 7 you can imagine what the rest will be like and all these are between the latitudes I have mentioned.

The very first one of these palaces is Broadlands, the home of the Mountbattens. It is really a majestic building. Lady Mountbatten was the grand-daughter of Ernest Cassel the Financial Advisor of Edward Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII. So when a little grand-daughter was born to Cassel he named her Edwina. Cassel's only son was given the title of Lord Templeton and, as Edwina was his only child, naturally she inherited Broadlands from him. Cassel was very rich, so you know what to expect in Broadlands. Almost all the palaces have one thing in common: the place between the gate and the house is always a bare gravel walk or at the most a lawn. The woods, the garden, the flower beds are always on the other side of the house. The house is full of Mountbatten souvenirs. We naturally got very excited as we remembered that the Mountbattens were our last Viceroy and Vicerine. They say Lady Mountbatten was a beautiful girl when young and used to lead a life of fun and frolic but when she came to India she was sedate and matronly. But Lord Mountbatten was still very handsome. With her money and his noble lineage they made the most popular couple in London society. When the Mountbattens were in Delhi we were in Bombay. It was war time and Sanat was given a very important post in our greatest industrial centre, Bombay. And of course everyone was doing what used to be called "*war effort.*" But soon our chance came to meet the Mountbattens. They came to visit Bombay. Naturally the Governor

threw a party where all the prominent citizens and officers were invited. Mountbatten was simply dashing and the lady though not pretty outwardly was a charming woman, a perfect society lady, who knew what to say and when to say it and never hurt the susceptibilities of anyone. Neither of them showed any sign of fatigue in the endless handshake and smile. Our house was on the Malabar Hill just two blocks away from the Government House Gate. So I saw the Mountbatten motor-cade at least six times a day. Everyone was sorry when they were gone. The greatest honour of Broadlands is that Princess Elizabeth (now Queen) and Prince Philip had spent their honeymoon there.

There is another very amusing story we heard there. When Lord Mountbatten went back to England after giving India Independence, someone gave a grand party in London where the Mountbattens and the Churchills were invited. As soon as Lord Mountbatten entered, Churchill rose to go saying "Dickie, I will never see you or talk to you again." People remembering newspaper items will recall the last thing Churchill said before resigning: "I will not preside over the liquidation of Her Majesty's Empire." But so popular were the Mountbattens that everyone wanted to see them in England and in India. Here the Mountbattens entertained Monarchs and Presidents and Roosevelt and Eisenhower.

Beaulieu Palace belonging to Lord Montague displays cars. Since this four-wheeled monster came into being, Lord Montague bought one of every model for his exhibition. A 1906 white Rolls is there. And they showed us a car called *Blue Bird*. This is the car in which Donald Campbell made a world speed record in 1964 with 403 miles an hour.

The next palace is obviously Blenheim. It is a mammoth of a palace, one gets lost and dazed. I don't know that it follows any recognised style. Wherever and whenever the engineer thought "this looks nice" he built. Sarah the first Duchess of Marlborough for whom this giant was erected found it cold and impersonal and frightful. As she was Queen Anne's friend she aired her opinion without fear of reproval. But the art collection is wonderful. In one of the rooms where the ladies kept their furs and capes during party-time Winston Churchill was born. The story runs thus: Lady Randolph Churchill, wife of the second son of the Duke of Marlborough, was expecting but did not think the moment was near. She was attending a grand party given by the Duke when the momentous time arrived and, as the room was near, Winston was born among ladies' furs and capes.

Bladen Church where Churchill was buried can be seen from one of the windows. There are 200 rooms, they say, in Blenheim Palace, and it sits comfortably among 2000 acres. It has a library 183 feet long with 10,000 books. Among the art collections the most wonderful are a Flemish tapestry and K'ang Rsi porcelain.

Twenty miles again and we come to Warwick Castle. The speciality of this palace is that William the Conqueror started it in 1066. And there are some ghosts 300 years old. Marewood House about 7 miles away is again very noteworthy, it belongs to the Queen's cousin, son of the Princess Royal, the only daughter of

King George V. A few miles away is the house of the Duke of Bedford. It holds some of the loveliest rooms in England, and is full of Canaletto Reynolds and displays the most exquisite dinner service by Sèvres. His palace has a animal park. You can enter the animal kingdom in a station wagon and actually see the animals—even tropical animals in a temperate setting. Enough for the Palaces, I think. I wish to add that the tourist should make it a point to see at least some of these noble houses.

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA S. BANERJI

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Yoga of the Rishis: the Upanishadic approach to death and immortality, by V. Madhusudan Reddy, Hyderabad, Institute of Human Study, 1985. Rs. 50.00. Available from SABDA.

THIS elegantly-produced little book is the record of a series of talks given by the author in San Francisco during the spring of 1978. Some questions of the listeners are also given together with the author's answers.

The central theme is, in the author's words: "The philosophy of the Upanishads with special reference to death and immortality... as it is developed in the four Upanishads, *Isha*, *Katha*, *Svetasvatara* and *Brihadaranyaka*." But since these talks were evidently addressed primarily to Westerners, this gives only the main focus to the discourses: Dr. Reddy has also touched on many other aspects of Hindu thought and culture, and complements his introduction to the traditional philosophy with spiritual and occult insights received from his teachers, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The first three talks centre on the tale of Nachiketas in the *Katha Upanishad*; the next expounds three sections of the *Brihadaranyaka*—the dialogue between Dripta-balaki and Ajatasatru, the teaching of Yajnavalkya to Maitreyi, and the debate between Yajnavalkya and the Brahmins at King Janaka's gift-giving session. The fifth and sixth chapters form the core of the book, the first dealing with the nature of Brahman as communicated by the Upanishads, and the second with the possibility of an individual relation with that transcendent Reality through the discovery of and union with the inner being described by the *Svetasvatara* as '*aṅguṣṭha-mātro ravi-tuḷya-rūpas*'—thumb-sized yet splendid as the Sun.

The seventh talk deals with the *Isha Upanishad*, and the eighth and ninth round off the series with a summing-up of the general theme, elaborated with reference to the insights given by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo on such topics as the ego, the true self, and the distinction between 're-incarnation' and 're-birth'.

The author has clearly steeped himself in the radiance of his sources, and this gives to his simple introductory exposition a convincing sincerity which makes the book both readable and inspiring.

Nevertheless we are reminded here and there what a difficult task it is to transcribe impromptu speech satisfactorily into written form, or in this case, whether through inadequate revision of the manuscript or through less than perfect proof-reading, or both, a number of careless constructions—which might pass quite unnoticed in the course of a talk—have survived to pull the reader up short, baffled until he can puzzle out what the speaker *meant* to say. This is all the more a pity when such evident care has gone into the design and production of the book, which is of a high standard one would like to see more often in Indian-produced paperbacks.

More significant than this shortcoming however is the fact that Dr. Reddy succeeds in his primary task: to convey something of the uniquely inspiring atmosphere of the 'Yoga of the Rishis' recorded in the Upanishads, and to communicate a thirst to come into closer contact with the spiritual power of their utterances.

SHRADDHAVAN