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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'S SUPRAMENTAL WORLD

On the 1st of August 1986 at about 2.30 a.m. I had a marvellous experience while I was in deep meditation. The Mother's grace gave me the golden opportunity to see something of Sri Aurobindo's Supramental World. O what a revelation of a Supreme Reality which surpasses all that we know of humanity and divinity! A grand illumined future full of hope opened wide before me and evoked in me a spontaneous reliance on it.

I do not know how to convey its wonderfulness, how to bring it home to people with the poor capacity of expression that I have.

I saw afar, coming into view from beyond the border-line of the horizon, straight from north to south, up to the furthest reach of sight, a vast limitless, unending, immeasurable space radiating with an ineffable golden hue. My eyes were at once focused in that direction and the sense of my entire being got lost in the magnificence of the incomprehensible animated vision. Although what I saw was but a part and not the whole, glimpses of the immensity of the unmanifested unknown whole were flashing out through it. It was also permeated with the presence of that whole. And then I was surprised to see a heavenly figure, *Purusha Mahān* — a divine being, aglow with supernal light, a mass of living gold, sitting at the southern end of that expanse, on an elevation facing northward. Only his profile could be seen, looking with firm, steady, penetrating eyes straight at the opposite end, as if something waited to come out from behind the veil of the horizon. His concentration on it was one-pointed. Here was a figure so majestic, calm and solemn that all my being was thrilled beyond description. And yet I felt him as most intimately known, as if he were my very own. With utter reliance and with an exuberance of joy I cried out, pointing to the figure, "Look, look, there is our Lord Sri Aurobindo with his Supramental World! It has come near, it is no more distant!"

SAHANADEVI

A LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO

TO SAHANA

10.9.37

I meant exactly the same thing as when I wrote to you that the “famous singer” must disappear and the “inner singer” take her place. The old psychological lines means the mental and vital aesthetic source of the singing, the desire of fame or success, singing for an audience — the singing must come from the soul within and it must be for the Divine.

What I wrote about the conservative clinging to traditional music was in answer to Dilip’s supposition about the source of your non-appreciation. I said if it were that it would be a mental limitation. I had written before that I gathered from what you had written that it was not that but a temperamental difference or a seeking for another vibration than what his music could give. As to the newness of Dilip’s music and how far he has been successful, I am not a musical expert and cannot pronounce. It was the Mother who gave him the advice and impulse to create something new. If Tagore’s most recent verdict is sincere, he has succeeded in doing it, since Tagore speaks of him as a creator in music.

A new creation need not be on one line only, each creator follows his own line, otherwise he would be more of an imitator than a creator. There are many who receive inspiration from me in poetry but they do not all write on the same line. Nishikanta’s poetry is different from Dilip’s, Nirod’s from Amal’s.

As for your singing, I was not speaking of any new creation from the aesthetic point of view, but of the spiritual change — what form it takes must depend on what you find *within* you when the deeper basis is there.

I do not see any necessity for giving up singing altogether. I only meant, — it is the logical conclusion from what I have written to you not now only but before, — that the inner change must be the first consideration and the rest must arise out of that. If singing to an audience pulls you out of the inner condition, then you could postpone that and sing for yourself and the Divine until you are able, even in facing an audience, to forget the audience. If you are troubled by failure or exalted by success, that also you must overcome.

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON NOVEMBER 2, 1955

Mother reads from *The Synthesis of Yoga*,
"The Four Aids"

Now then, your question?

"The process of Yoga is a turning of the human soul from the egoistic state of consciousness absorbed in the outward appearances. . ." I did not quite understand "the egoistic state of consciousness absorbed in the outward appearances. . ."

People are occupied with outward things. That means that the consciousness is turned towards external things—that is, all the things of life which one sees, knows, does,—instead of being turned inwards in order to find the deeper truth, the divine Presence. This is the first movement. You are busy with all that you do, with the people around you, the things you use; and then with life; sleeping, eating, talking, working a little, a little fun also, etc., etc., and then it begins again. And then what this one has said, what that one has done, what one ought to do, the lesson one ought to learn, the exercise one ought to prepare; and then again whether one is keeping well, whether one is feeling fit etc. This is what one usually thinks about.

So the first movement—and it is not easy—is to make all that pass to the background, and let one thing come inside and in front of the consciousness as the important thing: the discovery of the very purpose of existence and life, to learn what one is, why one lives, and what there is behind all this. This is the first step; to be interested more in the cause and goal than in the manifestation. That is, the first movement is withdrawal of the consciousness from this total identification with outward and apparent things, and a kind of inward concentration on what one wants to discover, the Truth one wants to discover. This is the first movement.

Many people who are here forget one thing. They want to begin by the end. They think that they are ready to express in their life what they call the supramental Force or Consciousness, and they want to infuse this in their actions, their movements, their daily life. But the trouble is that they don't at all know what Force or Consciousness is and that first of all it is necessary to take the reverse path, the way of interiorisation and of withdrawal from life, in order to find within oneself this truth which has to be expressed.

For as long as one has not found it, there is nothing to express. And by imagining that one is living an exceptional life, one lives only in the illusion of one's exceptional state. Therefore, at first not only must one find one's soul and the Divine who possesses it, but one must identify oneself with it. And then later,

one may begin to come back to outward activities, and then transform them; because then one knows in what direction to turn them, into what to transform them.

One can't jump over this stage. One must first find one's soul, this is absolutely indispensable, and identify oneself with it. Later one can come to the transformation. Sri Aurobindo has written somewhere: "Our Yoga begins where the others end". Usually yoga leads precisely to this identification, this union with the Divine—that is why it is called "yoga". And when people reach this, well, they are at the end of their path and are satisfied. But Sri Aurobindo has written: we begin when they finish; you have found the Divine but instead of sitting down in contemplation and waiting for the Divine to take you out of your body which has become useless, on the contrary, with this consciousness you turn to the body and to life and begin the work of transformation—which is very hard labour. It's here that he compares it with cutting one's way through a virgin forest; because as nobody has done it before, one must make one's path where there was none. But to try to do this without having the indispensable directive of the union with the Divine within, within one's soul, is childishness. There.

I am speaking of yoga. I am not speaking of your life, of you all, you children here, that's different. You are here to develop yourselves. And when you are developed and have a precise thought of your own, a vision of your own, when you have enough knowledge to be able to choose freely what life you want to lead, then at that time you will take a decision.

But those who have already taken the decision, well for them it is first of all indispensable to find their soul and unite with their psychic being, and with the Divine who is within it. This is an absolutely indispensable beginning. One can't leap over that bridge, it is not possible. It can be done very quickly if you know how to use the help that's given to you; but it has to be done.

That's all?

Pavitra is looking for his soul!

Mother, here Sri Aurobindo says: "... the same problem has to be approached from a new starting-point."

Yes. That's exactly what I have just said. The problem remains the same. . .

The problem. . .

The problem is to find one's soul and unite with the Divine.

But, Mother, was it the same during the Vedic times also?

To find their soul and the Divine? Of course.

But they did not succeed?

No, Sri Aurobindo says that in the Vedic age they tried to bring the spiritual life

into the physical life, but he says that the means they employed, the paths they followed at that time are no longer any good now. Just imagine us before an altar making a puja! . . . It won't do now, it is not suitable.

Is their goal and ours the same?

I think so.

In any case, there were several ages in the earth's history in which there was given a kind of example, as a promise, of what would be there one day. These were called the golden ages. But certainly there were times in which a more or less complete representation of what had to be was as though lived out. Only it was just a demonstration, an example, which the world was completely unfit to take up as a realisation.

It was only to say: you see, this is how it will be, but not like this in all its details, like this in essence. And I think it did not last very long. In any case the memory of the thing is very limited, very localised and extremely short. There was an intensity, there was a great beauty in the expression, but it was something as though altogether independent of the whole of terrestrial life; an example. . . almost an example which is not to be followed, which cannot be followed, and which was always accompanied by a promise: "It will be like this". . . a promise which has been repeated in very different words, of the New Earth or the Divine World or a New Creation, etc.

And I think it was perhaps at the beginning . . . not exactly the beginning of humanity but of the conscious evolution of humanity towards a realisation. We said last time that for a very long time humanity was very static, and as though undergoing a preparation so slow, so invisible that it has taken perhaps millions of years. But these promises and examples were like starting-points, like the first push given to begin the evolution of the consciousness towards a higher realisation.

I think the Vedic age was the latest. There were others before it, but of a very short duration.

Something over there?

A question? . . . Is that all?

Mother!

It's still that fellow asking questions!

What do you want to know?

When Vivekananda spoke of "the essential unity which would find its perfect state", did he think about it vaguely or . . .

Vivekananda, as far as I know, was not much for a material realisation. He belonged rather to the order of those who want to escape from life, cure themselves of this illness.

But at the end of his life he was sorry he had not succeeded.

I had once read something, I don't know where now, because it was in France, it was a translation in a book, perhaps one of those theosophical books which make translations of Indian things. I had read an incident recounted about Vivekananda who had been deeply shocked and had scolded a disciple because the latter had told him: "Oh! look how magnificent is the sunset!" This had shocked him deeply. I remember I read this in France and it struck me; I still remember it because it seemed to me . . . it was his remark that seemed scandalous to me! He said. "Oh! is it beautiful? If you appreciate the beauty of Nature you will never attain the Divine." I don't know, by the way, whether this was true or had been invented by the one who narrated it, I know nothing about it. I am only saying I had read it and that it struck me so much that many times when I look at the sunset or sunrise or a lovely effect of light I still recall this and tell myself. "Why such a dissociation. . . how strange that one can't live the spiritual life if one admires Nature!"

So if it is true that he was like that, he was certainly at the other end of our programme. I am telling you I don't know whether it is true, but still, I am giving it to you for what it's worth. And all that I read about him was like this that he had a deep contempt for all physical things, that he took them at the most as a means of self-development and liberation—nothing more.

Mother, you said that the Vedic age was like a promise. A promise to whom?

To the earth and men.

They left a kind of oral document of their experience. It was transmitted—and this was the promise.

They used an imaged language. Some people say that it was because they wanted it to be an initiation which would be understood only by the initiates. But it could also be an absolutely spontaneous expression without a precise aim to veil things, but which could not be understood except by those who had the experience. For it is quite obviously something that is not mental, which came spontaneously—as though it sprang from the heart and the aspiration—which was the completely spontaneous expression of an experience or knowledge, and naturally, an expression which was poetic, which had its own rhythm, its own beauty, and could be accessible only to those who had an identical experience. So it was veiled of itself. There was no need to add a veil upon it. It is more than likely that it happened like that.

When one has a true experience which is not the result of a preliminary thought constructing and obtaining the experience by a special effort, when it is a direct and spontaneous experience, an experience that comes from the very intensity of the aspiration, it is spontaneously formulated into words. When it is total and complete enough, it is formulated into words. . . which are not thought out, which are spontaneous, which come out spontaneously from the consciousness. Well, it is more than likely that the Vedas were like that. But only those who

have had the experience, had the same state of consciousness, can understand what it means.

There are those sentences which seem absolutely banal and ordinary, in which things seem to be said in an almost childish way, and which are written out or heard and then noted down, like that. Well, when read with an ordinary consciousness, they seem sometimes even altogether banal. But if one has the experience, one sees that there is a power of realisation and a truth of expression which give you the key to the experience itself.

But it seems obvious that the modern equivalent, at present, of the Rishi of the olden days . . . even his spontaneous Vedic expression will be very different in its formulation. For the terrestrial development and human development change the conditions of expression. The way of saying of those times and the way of saying today cannot be the same; and yet the experience can be the experience of something which cannot be thought about but comes as its living expression.

Mother, were the Vedic Rishis men who had evolved to that state or were they special manifestations?

What do you mean? Whether they were evolutionary beings or involutory beings?

They were probably . . . no . . . they were surely involutory beings. But the body was the result of evolution.

But it is absolutely certain that they were involutory beings, that is, beings who had come down from higher regions and used these bodies, who had identified themselves with these bodies.

This is it, what I said the other day, you know, that what has changed the course of terrestrial and human development totally is bodies becoming perfected enough to be able to serve as instruments for beings of higher regions who have come to incarnate in them in order to use them. And it seems obvious that the Rishis were of these—if not all at least those who were the leaders, those who are at the head. But very probably they formed a group which must have had its own realisation, very independent of the surroundings. They lived, besides, quite isolated, if what is reported is correct.

(Silence)

That's all? . . . Nothing more? No?

*Mother, will the evolution continue or will it be replaced by involution?
That is . . .*

Yes, I understand . . . But what I don't understand is the point of your question—whether the process of terrestrial development will continue by an evolution . . .

. . . or whether it will be replaced by an involution.

Yes . . . but there is one thing you forget. That Sri Aurobindo has said that each new species which appeared upon earth was the result of an involution. So there has always been the combination of the two. A double work: a work that goes from below upward, and an answer which comes from above downward.

Mother, isn't the evolution the inherent Divine manifesting himself? Then why is it necessary?

Involution or evolution?

Evolution. That is, for example, there was first the evolution of the animal mind. So it was said that the mind was already . . .

In principle . . .

Hidden, in principle.

In principle, yes. And what prepares it is this: you see, it has been called by all kinds of names: a divine spark, a Presence, etc., which is infused in the darkness of matter in order to start the evolution. But there is something else: there is a descent and identification of beings, of conscious beings, individualities, in the forms produced by the evolution—and so there is a union which takes place between beings of higher regions and the forms evolved by this divine Presence. And the identification takes place between this immanent godhead and this being which comes down. You see, it is when the psychic being, for instance, identifies itself with a personality of a higher order, a divine emanation, a *vibhuti* who comes to get identified with a psychic being—that is it, this is the thing. But it is not just this one or the other. One does a work of this kind, as I say, a work of development from within outwards; and the other is something which comes down and takes possession of what the first has prepared.

Usually these are individual phenomena. These identifications are individual phenomena. Usually, I don't say that it is impossible for it to be a collective phenomenon; but still, usually they are individual phenomena.

However, it is enough to have the experience and one understands. It becomes very clear.

So, one must not speak, one must act
There we are. That's all?
Good night, my children.

(Questions and Answers, 1955, pp. 354-62)

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of October 1986)

(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 attempt for the speeches of the others.)

December 24, 1940

M: Is there, Sir, such a condition of detachment that one is not disturbed or perturbed by anything whatsoever?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not?

M: Practicable, Sir? *(Laughter)*

Sri Aurobindo: Is it only in theory, then? An ideal not realisable in practice? As with Tagore who is reported to have said that yogic realisations are ideals only, not realisable, not meant for practice?

M: Has anybody achieved it, Sir?

Sri Aurobindo: It is one of the aims of Yoga

M: I know, but is it possible? *(Laughter)*

Sri Aurobindo: If it is impossible, why should it be an aim of Yoga? Merely as an ideal? Honesty is an ideal to be observed in commercial transactions. Does it mean you must observe it only when it suits you? *(Laughter)*

P: Is the synopsis ready?

Sri Aurobindo: No, I have just made a summary from which the synopsis will be made. After it is done, we can try it on Manilal and see if he understands it.

M: If you make me understand, I will, Sir.

After some time I asked what was meant by space being coexistent with souls. Sri Aurobindo explained it but I could not follow.

M: Souls have no space, Sir?

Sri Aurobindo: There is a theory to that effect.

M: According to Jainism they have no space.

Sri Aurobindo: What is space then according to Jainism?

M: *Ākāsh*.

Sri Aurobindo: What is *ākāsh*?

M: Empty space.

Sri Aurobindo: How is it empty?

M: There are many atoms pervading it.

Sri Aurobindo: Where do the atoms come from?

M: They don't come from anywhere. They have been always there from time immemorial.

Sri Aurobindo: From time immemorial? How do they come?

M: They have been there, Sir. We have to take it for granted. (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: What is time then according to Jainism?

M: There is no time; it is indivisible. What we see as present becomes past and what is future becomes present.

Sri Aurobindo: So there is past and present.

M: How, Sir? What we call "just now" has become already past. So there is no present. Mahavira and Buddha were at one time present but they no longer exist.

Sri Aurobindo: If time was indivisible they should exist now. You speak of from moment to moment.

M: Relatively, Sir.

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by relatively? otherwise it is absolute timelessness. (*Here there was talk about a discussion of Sri Aurobindo's Life Divine by philosophers.*)

M: Is space indivisible?

Sri Aurobindo: Not unless it is useful for it to be so (*laughter*), otherwise you have to go on walking for three miles without stopping . . . If you have to take everything for granted, take my philosophy also for granted and don't discuss it. (*Laughter*)

M: That requires a lot of *shraddha*, Sir. (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: Then should I be asked to have *shraddha* in your Jain philosophy? (*Laughter*) There are some postulates that are taken for granted. After a time they are given up in favour of some other postulates. For instance, matter was at one time thought to be the source and origin of everything. Now they have upset that theory.

Space is indivisible in the sense that existence is indivisible. If you look at existence as a whole, the one Being, then space and time are indivisible. But if you come to the individual being, they are divided when you want to do anything. India is indivisible but it is very much divided! (*Laughter*)

Evening

Sri Aurobindo (*to P*): What is the news of the world?

P (*smiling a little*): I have no news. You have read Lloyed George's speech?

M: It is a very balanced speech, Sir.

Sri Aurobindo: Very balanced? Nonsense! The one thing he lacks is balance. The one thing he has is vigour.

M: He has made a strong attack on the Government. Chamberlain, Churchill and others are saying that they have committed big mistakes.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, everybody makes mistakes except himself. Who doesn't

make mistakes? Gandhi has also admitted that he has made Himalayan blunders.

P: Lloyd George asks to state war aims and peace terms. How can one do that now?

M: And he refers to his own government in 1917.

P: Yes, but that was when he was winning, while now they are just in the thick of the fight, at most 50% success. And if they start stating war aims and peace terms now, division and quarrel will start among them giving a handle to Hitler to break up their alliance.

Sri Aurobindo: Quite so. What peace terms did Lloyd George give?

M: It was the Versailles treaty and this war as a result. Perhaps he wants to be the Prime Minister.

Sri Aurobindo: He is too old for that. Besides, he is most unreliable.

M (*after a short while*): There is a Jaina sloka which means that mind is a bondage to Mukti. Can it be true, Sir?

Sri Aurobindo: Bondage? Instrument, if you like. But mind is not the only instrument of Mukti; it is the power of the Spirit also that brings Mukti. You can say mind is an instrument of bondage in the sense that it is the dividing principle that separates itself from the Unity and brings in division and ignorance. Life can be more properly said to be the real instrument. The life principle is the principle of desire, a straining after various objects of desire. Life is the root of all desires with which it affects the mind. The desires of the mind are not really desires because its business is to know, to perceive.

M: Life is the seat of emotions, I thought.

Sri Aurobindo: Emotions, sensations and several other things. That is the mistake most people usually commit, especially influenced by Western ideas. They don't make any distinction between mind and life, they consider them the same. This President of Philosophical Congress at Madras says that mind is hungry. Mind is not hungry, it is the life and body that are hungry.

P: Prof. Atreya calls Krishnamurti also a philosopher.

Sri Aurobindo (*chuckling*): Bhagwan Das also and Radhakrishnan. Is Radhakrishnan really a philosopher? Has he contributed anything new?

P: No, he is only an exponent of Indian philosophy.

Sri Aurobindo: That's what I thought. He is one of the highest authorities on Indian philosophy but I don't know that he has produced any new philosophy. He is a Shankarite, isn't he?

P: Yes.

M: He may have realised Shankar's philosophy.

Sri Aurobindo: Realised? You mean he is a yogi? Everybody knows he is not. He is only an interpreter.

M: He could be both, Sir.

Sri Aurobindo: He is *not*! What do you mean by could be? Anybody could be, you could be, Lloyd George could be—(*Laughter*)

P: A Ceylonese young man, a Buddhist, came to see the Ashram. He says

Buddha didn't teach that the world was full of evil.

Sri Aurobindo: Oh!

P: But I asked him whether Buddha said or not that the world is "full of sorrow"; and that "one must escape from it"?

Sri Aurobindo: Not full of evil but undesirable.

P: He also makes out that Buddha spoke of a divine consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo: I see!

M: He meant Nirvana probably.

Sri Aurobindo: Buddha didn't mean that by Nirvana. Of course he didn't say what Nirvana is

P: This man doesn't believe in the Jataka stories of Buddha.

N: Tell it to Dr. Manilal.

M: Why? I believe in them

Sri Aurobindo: That is just the point.

M: Are there no previous births, Sir?

P: The point is whether all that is said is true.

After this Dr. Manilal was going away. Suddenly he came back and said, "Mother has said to Sri Hukum Chand, 'I know you.'"

Sri Aurobindo: Well, what about it?

M: That means there are previous births.

Sri Aurobindo: Nobody denies it.

N: Nirod doesn't believe it.

N: I didn't say that.

P: He doesn't deny the principle of rebirth but all that is said about the knowledge by yogis or Tirthankaras of so many previous births is doubtful, e.g. Manilal's *adishwar* knew about all his previous births and that his mother was a banana tree. (*Laughter*)

M: Why, a Tirthankara is supposed to be *sarvajña*.

Sri Aurobindo: How do you know that?

M: It is said in the books, Sir. (*Laughter*)

Sri Aurobindo: Who said it?

M: If it was not true and if Krishna and Arjuna didn't exist, you would not have written *Essays on the Gita*, Sir.

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? Whether they existed or not I would still have written it if the truth of the Gita was there.

N: Sri Aurobindo has said it himself in the preface that the important point is not whether Krishna and Arjuna did actually exist but whether the things said in the Gita are true.

At this point Dr. Manilal left.

Sri Aurobindo: I have been reading today Plotinus on Matter by Dean Inge. It is curious that what he was trying to describe with much difficulty in various ways was what we call the Inconscient in Matter. But as he had no knowledge of the Inconscient he couldn't express it properly. Of course he is speaking of Matter

as a principle, not as a form. This Dean Inge is a confused mind, he can't state his thoughts clearly and logically and bungles the whole thing. But what Plotinus says is that Matter is infinite, indeterminate and non-being—that means the Inconscient; and if Matter is raised to the level of the Spirit it could be divine, *i.e.* matter itself is the Divine.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

INSPIRATION

I know not Thy occult source, O Inspiration!
Simply I bear in me an untold anguish . . .
And seek Thee, above, within and all around.
But hidden Thou remainest and ever aloof!

Then suddenly Thy fingers touch unawares
The inmost strings of Thy human harp
And produce deep notes to echo the Supreme,
O Thou formless, featureless Muse eternal!

Barren was my being and the inner lamp untrimmed . . .
Thy Grace gave to life the yearning for the Vast,
And kindled mind with the gold-light of vision:
O Spirit of the oncoming creation!

Mute heart melts with Thy magic spark,
Tears roll down from wistful eyes,
And heavenly delight mingles with mortal pang
To welcome Thy footfall on the sordid earth . . .

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

THE ASHRAM'S SIXTY YEARS

GLIMPSES FROM A PERSONAL STANDPOINT

A line in the opening passage of Sri Aurobindo's *Iliad* runs;

Ida climbed with her god-haunted peaks into diamond lustres. . .

A sacred mountain of ancient Greece, Ida as seen by the poet, an ever-uplifting vigil, full of secret divine presences, now emerging in the dawn-light which has the purity and transparent depth of an ethereal diamond — here is an apt symbol for Sri Aurobindo's Ashram on November 24, 1986, the sixtieth year of its establishment, what is termed in traditional reckoning its diamond jubilee.

It is also apt that Ida should be spoken of in the feminine gender — indeed in classical poetry the mountain is sometimes addressed as "Mother Ida". The Ashram of Sri Aurobindo stands as the outermost body, so to speak, of the radiant personality in whose hands Sri Aurobindo put his followers when he withdrew from public contacts on November 24, 1926 in order to expedite by a dynamic concentration the fulfilment of his Integral Yoga — the personality whom these followers, inspired by him, called the Divine Mother.

There was no organised life among them before this date. The occasion marked the spiritual event known as the descent of the Overmind, the world of the Great Gods, the plane of Krishna-consciousness, into the physical being of Sri Aurobindo. It is named the Victory Day, for it gave him the prospect of the culminating descent of the Highest Reality, the Supermind which holds the perfect model of all that evolves here — physical form, vital drive, mental energy, with the hidden spark of the Supreme, the inmost soul, acting upon and through different aspects of them in birth after birth.

What the *Iliad*-line suggests is the Mother of the Ashram carrying her creation in herself and bearing it upward into her own universal and transcendent Self. This Self of hers, in terms of luminous coloration, is, in Sri Aurobindo's words, "the white light. . . of the pure conscious force from which all the rest come" — the shining power productive and transformative which is often visioned by the disciples in the form of diamonds. "Diamonds," in Sri Aurobindo's symbology, "indicate the Mother's Light at its intensest, for that is diamond-white light." It is into "diamond lustres" that the Mother climbs in her deepest being for her children and, through them, for the world-nature they represent.

Therefore the Diamond Jubilee of the Ashram should put us most in mind of the Mother gloriously on the way to consummating the destiny of the earth with which Sri Aurobindo charged her six decades ago. And that the Greece-suffused hexameter we have quoted should prove suggestive of her is in the fitness of things for me to whom ancient Hellas is still alive despite the sweep of destructive ages over her history. To me, as to Shelley,

Greece and her foundations are,
 Sunk beneath the tides of war,
 In Thought and its eternity.

Why the Greece-ward turn was so strong from my boyhood became intelligible when both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother told me that most distinctly to their eyes I had been an ancient Athenian in a past life. My bond with Sri Aurobindo may have been close at that time too, for Nolani has reported that two of Sri Aurobindo's incarnations in the past were Pericles and Socrates—Pericles who stood at the sovereign centre of the Classical Age of Greece which was one of the finest efflorescences of the human spirit, literary as well as political—Socrates who came at the end of this Age and initiated most brilliantly and profoundly the reign of the inspired reason in European history. Literary power, political wisdom, philosophical insight, besides Yogic seerhood, distinguish Sri Aurobindo who was a master of Greek and whose *Iliad*, next to his *Savitri*, is the greatest poetic work he has achieved. The Mother, born in Paris, steeped in French culture, has also a strain of Hellas, for, when someone in Sri Aurobindo's Cambridge days compared London to ancient Athens, the young Indian student of history as well as of literature and languages remonstrated that it could be compared only to Corinth of antiquity whereas the counterpart of ancient Athens in modern times was Paris.

But, of course, whatever the play of a modernised Athenian temper with its love of beauty and clarity and liberty in the new world which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother aim to manifest, the principal moving element in it is Spiritual India of the ages with her face of past illuminations turning to a yet vaster light from the future. An immense precursor of that light brought about the birth of the Ashram and threw into relief the Mother's mission. A.B. Purani, who was one of the twenty-four disciples present on the memorable twenty-fourth of November, has written vividly of the occasion. We may quote the concluding part of his narrative:

“From the beginning of November 1926 the pressure of the Higher Power began to be unbearable. Then at last the great day, the day for which the Mother had been waiting for so many years, arrived on the 24th. The sun had almost set, and everyone was occupied with his own activity—some had gone out to the seaside for a walk—when the Mother sent round word to all the disciples to assemble as soon as possible in the verandah where the usual meditation was held. It did not take long for the message to go round to all. By six o'clock most of the disciples had gathered. It was becoming dark. In the verandah on the wall near Sri Aurobindo's door, just behind his chair, a black silk curtain with gold lace work representing three Chinese dragons was hung. The three dragons were so represented that the tail of one reached up to the mouth of the other and the three of them covered the curtain from end to end. We came to know afterwards that there is a prophecy in China that the Truth will manifest itself on earth when the three dragons (the dragons of the earth, of the mind region and of the sky) meet. Today

on 24 November the Truth was descending and the hanging of the curtain was significant.

“There was a deep silence in the atmosphere after the disciples had gathered there. Many saw an oceanic flood of Light rushing down from above. Everyone present felt a kind of pressure above his head. The whole atmosphere was surcharged with some electrical energy. In that silence, in that atmosphere full of concentrated expectation and aspiration, in the electrically charged atmosphere, the usual, yet on this day quite unusual, tick was heard behind the door of the entrance. Expectation rose in a flood. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother could be seen through the half-opened door. The Mother with a gesture of her eyes requested Sri Aurobindo to step out first. Sri Aurobindo with a similar gesture suggested to her to do the same. With a slow dignified step the Mother came out first, followed by Sri Aurobindo with his majestic gait. The small table that used to be in front of Sri Aurobindo’s chair was removed this day. The Mother sat on a small stool to his right.

“Silence absolute, living silence—not merely living but overflowing with divinity. The meditation lasted about forty-five minutes. After that one by one the disciples bowed to the Mother.

“She and Sri Aurobindo gave blessings to them. Whenever a disciple bowed to the Mother, Sri Aurobindo’s right hand came forward behind the Mother’s as if blessing him through the Mother. After the blessings, in the same silence there was a short meditation.

“In the interval of silent meditation and blessings many had distinct experiences. When all was over they felt as if they had awakened from a divine dream. Then they felt the grandeur, the poetry and the absolute beauty of the occasion. It was not as if a handful of disciples were receiving blessings from their Supreme Master and the Mother in one little corner of the earth. The significance of the occasion was far greater than that. It was certain that a Higher Consciousness had descended on earth. In that deep silence had burgeoned forth, like the sprout of a banyan tree, the beginning of a mighty spiritual work. This momentous occasion carried its significance to all in the divine dynamism of the silence, in its unearthly dignity and grandeur and in the utter beauty of its every little act. The deep impress of divinity which everyone got was for him a priceless treasure.

“Sri Aurobindo and the Mother went inside. Immediately Datta was inspired. In that silence she spoke: ‘The Lord has descended into the physical today.’ ”

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A year and twenty days later I arrived in Pondicherry with my wife Daulat whom Sri Aurobindo and the Mother gave a new name shortly afterwards: “Lalita.” Sri Aurobindo explained it: “Beauty of refinement and harmony—this is the idea underlying this word. It is a name also of one of the companions of Radha.” I too got a new name but it took Sri Aurobindo long to strike on it. The complexity of my nature may have caused the delay. At last it came: “Amal

Kiran", with the meaning "The Clear Ray." All that complexity had to be made straight and pellucid and one-pointed, though without losing the essence of whatever richness might go with it. Indeed a tall order to live up to if it directed one to a future such as is glimpsed in that line in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*:

A ray returning to its parent sun.

In the period before we came, the Ashram-life had passed through its brightest phase—in the sense that marvellous experiences filled every hour. The Great Gods of the Overmind were felt descending and the Mother could bring out most markedly into her physical being something of the powers and personalities which Sri Aurobindo speaks of as being hers: Maheswari the vast and calm and all-controlling Knowledge, Mahakali the Truth-flashing Warrior of the Worlds, Mahalakshmi the Ever-blissful and All-beautiful, Mahasaraswati the Doer of Perfect Work and the Maker of Flawless Form. With hardly any sleep and very little food she could carry on her day's spiritual activities and her night's occult labours. But the transformative process she had set going in the sadhaks from a poise high above met with the resistance of the human ego in them as soon as the action turned from the inner to the outer. Evidently the earth-nature was not ready for a direct pressure from high above. A new technique of transformation seemed called for.

A sign of this need may also be discerned in an extraordinary event in the Mother's own career of manifesting the Divine. I vividly remember the substance of her account of it to me in an interview. She said she had come to possess the Word of Creation. When I looked a little puzzled she added: "You know that Brahma is said to create by his Word. In the same way whatever I would express could take place. I had willed to express a whole new world of superhuman reality. Everything was prepared in the subtle dimension and was waiting to be precipitated upon earth." On the eve of the precipitation she went to Sri Aurobindo and told him of what her Creative Word was about to do. He heard in silence the entire splendid story, then made the comment to the following effect: "It is the Overmind you will manifest. It will be a new religion full of miracles. But the Overmind on earth will be so glorious that people will want nothing beyond it. The Supermind will be held up for milleniums. It is the Supermind we want to establish." The Mother went back to her room, plunged into meditation for two hours and swept away the whole future which she had conjured up and in which she would have been the dazzling creative centre. This was surely the mightiest act of renunciation in spiritual history.

When I reached Pondicherry the old line of work had already been modified. Though the "overhead" reality's descent was always the goal, now the process was a working from below. Both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother came down into the physical consciousness and assuming all its difficulties and dangers set themselves on a long arduous course. To open up the obscure recesses of earth-nature and evoke the secret flame in the human heart, the psychic being with its cry of

love from the depths to the Ultimate Unknown: such was the mode of Yoga when I joined the Ashram on December 16, 1927.

The Ashram then was a very small community, numbering perhaps forty members or so. Most I came in touch with forceful Purani, gentle Pujalal, poised Nolini, sympathetic Amrita, diligent Champaklal, disciplined Dyuman, simple Rajangam, enthusiastic Dara, scrupulous Premanand, cordial Pavitra, dignified Anilbaran and courteous Doraiswamy on his week-ends from Madras. All of them were devoted workers. I sought to catch the light which they channelled in their diverse ways. I was the youngest among them — having just completed 23 years — and studiously watched their general mode of life. It was not ascetic in the old sense. They ate well and had decent rooms, but there was a subdued tone in all they did. Their living style was rather different from the one in the Ashram at present. People sometimes remark that Yoga has become so much easier now, with comforts and contacts increased and restrictions lessened. The truth is quite the opposite. The old life, spare and somewhat reserved, induced naturally the Yogic mood. The new one demands all our energies to keep the concentrated attitude. Those who have gone through the earlier regime may have the habit of practising the presence of God at all moments, but the temptation to make-do with a watered-down self-consecration is always round the corner. It is much more difficult now to keep the psychic flame burning every hour as one's guide and guardian.

It is, however, vain to think of reviving old conditions. As Nolini once wrote, the original Ashram was too self-enclosed: the world tended to be shut out. Although this was necessary at one stage, a time had to come when the Ashram-doors would be thrown open. Mostly during World War II people from all parts of India sought protection and safety in the Ashram for their families. A great influx of children took place and life in general had to be altered. We have to adjust ourselves to the new conditions and make them harmonious with the inner intensity. At times an attempt seems to be made to lift some rules out of their old context and set them up as if intended for all periods. Any warning that neglect of them might have undesirable consequences strikes one as ill-conceived. To apply a practice from early days wholesale to living-styles very different would be unrealistic. Of course, discrimination as regards the outside world has always to be exercised by the Ashramites, but there is little room for doctrinaire restrictions which everybody knows to be obsolete if not obstructive under present circumstances.

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Psychologically, one of the most central facts of the early days was the conviction that complete divinisation of the physical being was not only an aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga but also a practical goal. "Supramentalisation" was clearly understood to include a complete change in the body itself. What is most significant is that by "body" was meant the physical instrument of even the sadhaks and

not simply of the Master and the Mother. A letter of Sri Aurobindo on January 14, 1932 has the phrase: “. . . I want to divinise the human consciousness, to bring down the Supramental, the Truth-Consciousness, the Light, the Force into the physical to transform it. . .” Again, a letter of September 5, 1935, which couples the Mother with Sri Aurobindo by name, says: “What is being done is meant to prepare the manifestation of the Supermind in the earth-consciousness down to Matter itself, so it can't be for the physical of myself or the Mother alone.”

In this context I remember some words of Amrita, one of the earliest sadhaks. He used to be often in my room. Once when he was there we heard the sound of a funeral passing in the street. In a whisper as if conveying a secret, he said: “I have the feeling that this will not happen to me.” I did not raise my eyebrows in the least, for most of us who understood the originality of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual vision and his reading of the Supermind's implications could not help the expectation of a radical bodily change. Had not the Mother declared to me once that she hoped to cure me of the infantile paralysis that had struck at one of my legs? She had added that only the Supermind's power would be able to effect the cure, which meant my waiting for the Supramental descent into her outermost substance. Right down to the subtle-physical which lies behind this substance the new Consciousness had made its appearance. In a letter of August 1936, after affirming that “perfection on the physical plane is indeed part of the ideal of the Yoga, but it is the last item” and that till it would be achieved “one may have a certain perfection on other planes without having immunity in the body”, Sri Aurobindo admits that the overcoming of “difficulties of the realisation and transformation . . . has been done to a sufficient degree on the other planes—but not yet on the most material part of the physical plane.” Yes, the Master and the Mother stood transformed just short of the last lap of the Yogic journey. And not only did they seem sure—under the circumstances they faced at the time—that they would finish the course; they seemed sure also of several others following suit. Nor was it merely the feeling of the sadhaks that the all-transmuting work of the Supermind would touch them, removing the “the thousand natural shocks the flesh is heir to” in Shakespeare's tragic vision. A case may be cited in which the Master and the Mother themselves gave the promise in the most explicit terms.

A sadhak had been riddled with a sense of unfitness for the immense result such as our Gurus looked forward to in the very letter just quoted: “We have not sought perfection for our own separate sake, but as part of a general change—creating a possibility of perfection in others.” The mist in the sadhak's mind was dispelled with the deepest compassion during an interview with the Mother. He has never disclosed the fact in print before, but in this survey of the Ashram's existence he has been persuaded to communicate what may be deemed the most heartening event in his early spiritual life.

His private record, dated May 1929, of his inner response to the interview reads:

“Mother divine, ever since the day you told me that it is my destiny to be

transformed, I have tasted something of the Peace that belongs to the time-transcending Consciousness in which the future is no uncertain possibility but a path already traversed, a goal already attained, a truth of Eternity waiting only to be revealed and realised in Time.

“I remember how I approached you with a tortured mind, preyed upon by doubts and misgivings. I asked you if I would have to give up the Yoga and return to the life that is a death. And you said: ‘If it were your destiny that you should go back, I would not uselessly keep you here.’

“Catching the prophetic suggestion of your words, I begged of you to speak in a more positive manner and tell me whether it was really my destiny to remain with you and undergo the Great Transformation. You replied that it was so; and with eyes that held in their vision all the three times together you looked at me and said: ‘All this talk of your going away and forsaking God has no meaning for me.’ Not believing my own ears, still unconvinced that I was already marked out by your Grace, I ventured to doubt if you had this my present life in view or the ultimate goal to be reached in the course of many births. But with utter finality came the answer: ‘When I refer to your destiny, I mean this life and no other.’

“Destroyed was my delusion, my fears and hesitations dissolved like clouds, and I stood for ever in the peaceful foreshadow of the light that was to be.

“Mother—divinest—dearest—how shall I be grateful enough for your love?”

Some years later a critical necessity arose for a harking-back to the interview. The sadhak wrote:

“Mother, I have been feeling wretched at the thought of going from here to Bombay, even for a short time, and in spite of whatever desire I might have to go you never said ‘Yes’ all these years; now that you have, Yoga seems to grip me all the more. I think I must now go to the end of this venture I have undertaken, but I hope you will always protect me and be near me and bring me back safe. I had a talk with you years ago—a talk which meant *so* much to me—from my personal point of view it was the most precious thing I ever had the good fortune to record. I am sending you what I wrote then—that is, in May 1929: this sheet lay in my drawer but I have dug it out today because I felt uncertain whether you had really promised what I thought you had. I wish, Mother, you could tell me that I had not mistaken your meaning. I feel sure that I did not misrepresent you, but we are such self-gratifying fools—so I implore you to write to me whether it was a truth I recorded. For, if it is a truth, then life is indeed worth living.”
(30.1.1934)

Sri Aurobindo replied on the Mother’s behalf:

“Your account of the conversation with Mother is quite accurate.

“Mother is letting you go now because she thinks it is the best way to cure you of your lingering desire. But beware of any sentimental attachment to a woman which would hinder your destiny—for that is the one real danger to it. The Mother expects you to come back soon.”

The sadhak left Pondicherry a few days after February 21, 1934 and returned some days before August 15 the same year. In the years that followed there were other departures by him from Pondicherry and one that lasted a long time. Before this particular visit to Bombay the Mother had warned, along with a reassurance of victory, that the sadhak should run no risk of any accident doing serious damage to his body. All care was taken but he never dreamt that harm could come to him by his own hands. What the harm was can be gathered from extracts out of a letter of Sri Aurobindo's on 1.8.1938 when the sadhak was eager to return:

"You must on no account return here before your heart has recovered. No doubt, death must not be feared, but neither should death or permanent ill health be invited. Here, especially now when all the competent doctors have gone away or been sent to a distance from Pondicherry, there would be no proper facilities for the treatment you still need, while you have them all there. You should remember the Mother's warning to you when she said that you would have your realisation in this life provided you did not do something silly so as to shorten your life. That 'something silly' you tried your best to do when you swallowed with a cheerful liberality a poison-medicine without taking the least care to ascertain what was the maximum dose. You have escaped by a sort of miracle, but with a shaken heart. To risk making that shaky condition of the heart a permanent disability of the body rendering it incapable of resisting any severe physical attack in the future, would be another 'something silly' of the same quality. So it's on no account to be done. . ."

This extract is very relevant even outside the particular sadhak's life because apropos of it we may speculate why the extreme goal, envisaged by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for themselves, of a total transformation, down to the most external being, the material bodily instrument, as the initial step for a wider world-fulfilment, was given up in view of humanity's condition—first on December 5, 1950 when Sri Aurobindo passed away and finally on November 17, 1972 when the Mother made her exit.

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Sri Aurobindo's letter of 1.8.1938 ends with the words:

"You need not be afraid of losing anything great by postponing your return to Pondicherry. A general descent of the kind you speak of is not in view at the moment and, even if it comes, it can very easily catch you up into itself whenever you come if you are in the right openness; and if you are not, then even its descending would not be of so urgent an importance, since it would take you some time to become aware of it or receive it. So there is no reason why you should not in this matter cleave to common sense and the sage advice of the doctors."

These words were in answer to the sadhak's reference to a disclosure the Mother had made to him on the eve of his departure from the Ashram. She had told him that she was expecting something great and decisive in the course of the year and that he should be back before the event. The sadhak's reference ran;

“This is a year in which, I believe, the Truth-Consciousness may make up its mind, or rather its Supermind, to descend. I was expecting a wire from the Mother in May. She had mentioned approximately the middle of the year and had promised to inform me at once. It’s almost the end of July now — but the year is not out yet, and August 15 is pretty close. Won’t I be losing something great if I don’t throw all caution to the winds?”

Strictly speaking, what Sri Aurobindo, taking up the terminology used by the sadhak, called “a general descent” has been named by the Mother “the Supramental Manifestation” when the event at which she had hinted occurred at last — after nearly 18 years’ delay — on February 29, 1956. Elucidating it indirectly on March 29 of the same year the Mother made a change in one of her old “Prayers and Meditations” and made the passage go:

“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.”

Next year she made a direct mention of the manifestation of the Supermind’s Consciousness, Light and Force, though not yet its “Ananda”, in the earth’s atmosphere, meaning by the last expression the subtle-physical layer of the earth. This declaration gave us to understand that now the Supermind had taken the first fundamental step to become an organic part of the earth’s evolution and would eventually manifest in the gross-material layer through the transformed bodies of future Yogic aspirants and make its way gradually towards the revelation of “a new world” for all mankind.

So we have to look at the vision and work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother under two aspects. One is the general manifestation of the Supramental principle in terrestrial history, urging evolution to pass from Man to Superman in the broad span of centuries. Such a goal has been essentially accomplished. No wonder that the Mother, not too long after the glorious February 29, said to a few sadhaks, including my close friend Nirodbaran, that she saw no reason why she should not leave her body now that the things that had been promised had been fulfilled. The attendants were perturbed and pleaded with the Mother not to leave us but to continue her labour towards the divinisation of her body.

Bodily divinisation here and now is the second aspect. This aspect was made prominent in the early days of the Ashram, and we took it usually as a straightforward problem the solution of which was understood as a practical certainty in the Integral Yoga. But actually the problem is very complicated. To begin with: Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had the choice of transforming their own bodies in isolation from common humanity. In 1933 a sadhak asked Sri Aurobindo whether he was right in believing that if the Supermind was not established in the Mother’s body-consciousness, it was not because she was not ready for it like us, but because in order to establish it she had first to prepare the physical of the

sadhaks and of the earth to a certain extent. Sri Aurobindo answered: "Certainly. If we had lived physically in the Supermind from the beginning nobody would have been able to approach us nor could any sadhana have been done. There could have been no hope of contact between ourselves and the earth and men." The implication of Sri Aurobindo's answer is that the Mother and he could from the beginning have had not merely a completely divinised consciousness but also a completely divinised bodily existence. In fact, unless there were such an existence which would set them totally apart from earth and men, some "hope of contact" would remain. The utter transformation was within their reach. Intrinsic possibility of failure is ruled out. The same conclusion follows from another statement of Sri Aurobindo's in August 1936: "The Mother's difficulties are not her own: she bears the difficulties of others and those that are inherent in the general action and working for the transformation. If it had been otherwise, it would be a very different matter."

However, when the burden of humanity's unregenerate nature is assumed and a constant close intimate link with it from day to day is accepted for its salvation, the risk is run of being impeded from complete success. Although Sri Aurobindo and the Mother spoke of success not only for themselves but for their disciples as well, they were always aware of unfavourable contingencies. And there is the Divine's powers and a full chance is given to anti-divine forces to challenge each starts from the very opposite of the Divine—a total involution of all of the Divine's powers and a full chance is given to anti-Divine forces to challenge each move forward. Always the Grace intervenes of the free Divine beyond, yet a heavy price is paid again and again, and for all the certainty of the ultimate triumph time is often a grim battlefield even for the Divine's own incarnations. Particularly hard is the lot of the world-redeemer if he is bent on attacking the last stronghold of Matter—the body with its ills, its ageing process, its fate of mortality so far. Sri Aurobindo's letter of December 28, 1934 says that "the Supramental's advent is in the very nature of things inevitable", and that a number of souls have been sent to see that it shall be now", and that his own "faith and will are for the now"; but the letter also tells us that "the when and the how. . . is decided and predestined somewhere above", and it adds: "it is here being fought out amid a rather grim clash of conflicting forces. For in the terrestrial world the predetermined result is hidden and what we see is a whirl of possibilities and forces attempting to achieve something with the destiny of it all concealed from human eyes." Even from the eyes of the Avatar a part of the future is veiled. In a recent issue of *Sri Aurobindo's Action* (September) these lines are quoted from *Savitri*—

All that transpires on earth and all beyond

Are parts of an illimitable plan

The One keeps in his heart and keeps alone:—

and the Mother is asked: "Does the man, who is united with the One, know that 'plan'?" She replies: "To the extent that is necessary for the execution, yes; and to the needed extent, but not in its entirety all at once."

Gradually, in the years approaching the mid-century Sri Aurobindo appears to have intuited a mighty block in the path of his plan. He wrote to me in 1948 that things were getting too serious for him to spare time for intellectual arguments. In early 1950 the Mother and he felt that one of them would have to go and work from behind the physical scene. Evidently the going would be a seeming defeat yet serve as a secret means of victory. And indeed his withdrawal in the small hours of December 5 brought about a breakthrough that had been lacking since 1938 when the expected "general descent" was held up but the Mother used to see the Supermind come into Sri Aurobindo's bodily substance without getting fixed there. A year after his departure she told me that the moment Sri Aurobindo had left his body what he had called the Mind of Light had been realised in her. Here at last was the reason for the desperate-looking step the Avatar of the Supermind had taken, an acceptance of death in all its realism of a fatal disease (extreme uraemia in medical parlance) in order to win by the self-sacrifice a long-awaited boon. For, the Mind of Light has been defined by the Mother in a note I got in Bombay from Nolini as "the physical mind receiving the Supramental Light". Some years later these words sparked off a poem whose two opening lines the Mother pronounced to be a sheer Mantra exactly revealing what had happened in her body on December 5, while the rest of the piece was considered an imaginative reconstruction of the general psychophysical effect. The couple of verses specially picked out for praise were:

The core of a deathless Sun is now the brain
And each grey cell bursts to omniscient gold.

December 5, 1950 was another and greater Victory Day than November 24, 1926.

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This Victory Day, marking a prelude to the revolutionary transformation as distinguished from the evolutionary one, marked too a radical change in the posture of the Aurobindonian future. The original vision was of the Master and the Mother forming together the nucleus of the Supramental Race. Now that the Mother was left alone on the physical plane, a luminous blank was felt by the sadhaks ahead of them. Luminous because the Mother was still there, blank because the Master was absent. But the future acquired focus when the Mother announced that when she appealed to Sri Aurobindo to take up his body again he emphatically said "No" because he had given it up on purpose but reassured her by saying further that he would be the first to come back in a new supramental body made in the supramental way—that is, without the common process of birth as the result of a sex act. So we looked forward to a time when the Mother would represent the human supramentalised and Sri Aurobindo the Supramental humanised, she consummating the earth's Godward travail, he initiating an entirely superhuman race with no earthly past and directly precipitated into Matter with the help of the powers natural to the consummation she would exemplify.

To one whose every piece of writing had been offered to Sri Aurobindo and who had received his comment on it and with whom he had kept up correspondence even during the years when there had been no correspondence except with one other sadhak, Dilip Kumar Roy, the passing of Sri Aurobindo was like a universal sunset. But the Mother assured him: "Nothing has changed. Turn to Sri Aurobindo for inspiration as before and you will always receive it. Nothing has changed." Her words have proved true—and to minimise my feeling of physical loss her own unfailing graciousness did the utmost possible with her personal presence throughout the years from 1954 when I came back to the Ashram with my life's companion Sehra. I may mention, in passing, that Sehra fitted very well into the new life and the Mother has been recorded as counting her to be one who loved her truly.

Those years, ending with the near-close of 1973 when the Mother let her own body go, were perhaps the most productive in the Ashram's career. Life flowered both outwardly and inwardly as never before, owing to the intensity with which the Mother sought to obey Sri Aurobindo's call to her in the year he departed: "You have to fulfil our Yoga of Supramental Descent and Transformation." In the middle of 1973 she had to stop meeting people. The influx of a Power which had never been experienced by any humanly built receptacle in the whole history of the earth became so divinely disturbing that she wondered whether it was the Will of the Supreme that she should continue her arduous task. After all, she had already made the Supramental Consciousness, Light and Force a secret splendour in the earth's evolution. Need she wait on the earth still further? A few years earlier she had stated about her body's future: "Will it continue or will it get dissolved? . . . But the body knows that it has been decided, and that it is not to be told to the body. It accepts, it is not impatient, it accepts, it says, 'It is all right, it is as Thou wilt'. . . ." Not much later she had the inner experience of the new body that was ready to be manifested. Recounting it in the *Bulletin* of August 1972, p. 75, she said: "I was like that, I had become like that." And shortly afterwards, in the *Bulletin* of February 1973, p. 85 she announced: "I have had for a moment (the body)—just a few seconds—the supramental consciousness. It was so wonderful." There we have the Mother on the verge of fulfilling Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. But the last step of precipitating the new body into the old was not taken. The Mother appears to have found out that the Supreme's decision for the body was to end its struggle and suffering. She ceased in her efforts to keep the body going. Against the commonsense advice of her attendants she had been insisting for reasons of her own on walking, even though there had once been a frightening break-down. Now came a pause. The whole day of November 14 she was quiet but at night again she wanted to walk. The attendants said: "Mother, you should not walk." She, as her main attendant Pranab tells us, "obeyed" them. Pranab continues: "That was on the 15th. From that day she became absolutely obedient. Whatever we told her she did." This calm passivity of the Mother was obviously the pointer to the knowledge that had come to her that her

embodied being was to be abandoned at last. The obedience which had been noted was not to her attendants but to her own transcendent Self. We may be certain that the decision was sealed also by the Will of Sri Aurobindo from the subtle-physical plane where, according to a message of hers to us in the wake of his departure, he had established himself to help the aspiring world reach the golden future he had prophesied for it.

If ever in a weak moment, in spite of our inmost convictions, the word "failure" arises and tends to bring a strain of sadness, let us turn to another passage in the same issue of *Sri Aurobindo's Action* to which we have referred earlier. Quoting the unforgettable verse from *Savitri*—

His failure is not failure whom God leads—

the question is put: "Because it is part of the play?" The Mother writes back: "It is the human mind that has the conception of success and failure. It is the human mind that wants one thing and not another. In the divine plan each thing has its place. What matters is to be a docile and if possible a *conscious* instrument of the Divine Will. To be and to do what the Divine wants, this is the truly important thing."

We cannot close on a wiser note in the 13th year since the Mother joined the Master. Symbolising their union is the single monument, covered perpetually with a homage of flowers, in which their physical remains lie—the all-soothing Samadhi. Her presence, along with his, has been felt throughout the intervening period. It has sustained her beloved child, the Ashram, and led it firmly yet tenderly towards its diamond jubilee. When we shall look back upon the occasion we shall surely record, with a phrase from *Savitri*, that on that happy date, out of the depths of the Supreme Consciousness, blessing and rewarding her eager workers,

There poured awakening streams of diamond light.

K.D. SETHNA

SPIRITUALITY IN THE EARLY POETRY OF SRI AUROBINDO

When did the Divinity in Sri Aurobindo unveil its dawn radiance? When did the seed of spirituality sprout in Sri Aurobindo, who was different from ordinary mortals even in his early childhood and boyhood? Even as a boy he was above penury and privation, never lamented against the lacerating destiny which took him away from family and country, which deprived him of a mother's love and a father's protection when one needs them most.

From an early age Sri Aurobindo was conscious of having a mission, he had a premonition of his great role in the upliftment and moulding of humanity. He has noted for a memoir on him, "At the age of eleven Aurobindo had already received strongly the impression that a period of great upheaval and great revolutionary changes was coming in the world and he himself was destined to play a part in it"¹ When did the herald of Golden Supermind start the upward ascension towards Self's Skies? When were taken the first steps by the Divine on "the Way"² to the Divine? And whence did the sacred birth of that Supreme Yoga begin in which Sri Aurobindo assimilated and overpassed his own and the world's past before founding its glorious future.³

That the great experience of Adwaita-Vedantic Self which is generally supposed to take at least forty years of sincere sadhana came to him in his early youth in England itself, is evident from his answer to the question of an incredulous disciple—

Q: By the Self, I suppose, you mean the individual Self!

A: Good Lord, no. I mean the Self, sir, the Self, the Adwaita, Vedantic, Shanker Self. Atman, Atman! A thing I knew nothing about, never bargained for, didn't understand either.

Q: But didn't you begin Yoga later on in Gujerat?

A: Yes. But this 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. Precise enough?"⁴

That this experience in England was the bright forerunner of the glory of coming realisations, is further attested to by Sri Aurobindo—

"In a more deep and spiritual sense a concrete realisation is that which makes the thing realised more real, dynamic, intimately present to the consciousness than any physical thing can be. Such a realisation of the personal Divine or of the

¹ *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 26, p 4

² *Ibid.*, p. 78.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 81

impersonal Brahman or of the Self does not usually come at the beginning of a sadhana or in the first years or for many years. It comes so to a very few; mine came fifteen years after my first pre-yogic experience in London and in the fifth year after I started Yoga.”¹

The nature of his realisation Sri Aurobindo has described in the following passage—

“There was an entire silence of thought and feeling and all the ordinary movements of consciousness except the perception and recognition of things around without any accompanying concept or other reaction. The sense of ego disappeared and the movement of the ordinary life as well as speech and action were carried on by some habitual activity of Prakriti alone which was not felt as belonging to oneself. But the perception which remained saw all things as utterly unreal, this sense of unreality was overwhelming and universal. Only some undefinable Reality was perceived as true which was beyond space and time and unconnected with any cosmic activity, but yet was met wherever one turned.”²

This Nirvanic realisation was in 1908. Fifteen years earlier takes us to 1898. Thus before Sri Aurobindo left England he had his first pre-yogic experience at the young age of 21. This great experience came to the divine youth unasked for, unlooked for, even maybe without his fully comprehending its significance. But the decision to realise the Vedantic truth was taken in his teens in England.

“... , while reading Max Muller’s translations in the *Sacred Books of the East* series, he came across the idea of self or Atman. This struck him as some reality and he decided in his mind that Vedanta has something that is to be realised in life.”³

Surely in his childhood and early youth Sri Aurobindo must have faced and evaluated life from a much higher vantage point than ordinary mortals. For the traces of his early spirituality we have to search in the poems of *Songs to Myrtilla*, the collection of his early poems, those touches which later on swelled into an avalanche of divinity, those ripples which expanded into a vast and deep Ganges of Spirituality in his sonnets and mantric epic *Savitri*.

Here we find the emotional uplift, the reaching towards desire’s ungrasped object, the sweet sadness as of some unfathomed unfulfilled love, but above all these is an all-pervading mystic feeling. The Intangible is glimpsed everywhere, the supernatural peeps from line after line. The intense love of Radha is there, the Greek Empyrean and its mysteries are referred to and revealed again and again. Even in poems addressed to heroes of Sri Aurobindo’s boyhood and adolescence there is a constant reference to the higher powers, hidden divinities and there is a suffused sense of a power high above who controls the destiny of human beings and of earth, a sense of Divinity, a constant allusion to the

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77

² *Ibid.*, pp 85-86

³ *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*—by A.B Purani, p. 35

Beyond, to nature gods, Naiads, Dryads and Pan. Even in the poems written in his early teens at St. Paul's he is conscious of a Presence that rules from the misty skies above the seas of life. He is partly stationed here but a part of his consciousness is calling towards higher worlds. He is a pearl-diver of the inner depths. The first quest had started and so also the ascent on the golden stairs leading towards the Supermind. The intricate high and low vagaries of human love, the glowing eulogies of freedom-fighters, the great ideals and unavoidable defeats are there, yet the poet lays it all at the feet of a Super-power

K.D. Sethna (Amal Kiran in the Ashram), the keen Aurobindonian critic, has written about "Urvashi"—Sri Aurobindo's first achievement in the blank-verse narrative: "This super-love is set in an atmosphere in contact with some Super-Nature: spirits and entities, both good and evil, pervade Sri Aurobindo's outer world wearing shape and moulding movement."¹ This is equally or rather more applicable to the poems in *Songs to Myrtilla* where again and yet again we meet them, as if the thin veil of matter is torn and the subtle world is as real to the poet as this material one.

Art thou a goddess of the sea
 Purple-tressed and laughter-lipped
 From thy choric sisters slipped
 To wander on the flowery land?
 Or art thou siren on the treacherous sand
 Summer-voiced to charm the ear
 Of the wind-veht mariner?
 Ah! but what are these to thee,
 Brighter gem than knows the sea,
 Lovelier girl than sees the stream
 Naked Naiad of a dream,
 Whiter Dryad than men see
 Dancing round the lone oak-tree,
 Flower and most enchanting birth
 Of ten ages of the earth!
 The Graces in Thy body move
 And in thy lips the ruby hue of Love²

Goddesses of the sea, the fair Dryads and the siren's beautiful songs, sweet beyond imagination, give an impression of some intimacy and proximity. Was the Avatar poet besieged by the beauty of those entities in the woods and on the shores of seas and streams of England? The overall impression is not of poetic hyperbole but of subtle realities seen by the eyes and felt by the senses. According to the Indian tradition all great souls on their Spiritward or Godward march are enticed

¹ *The Poetic Genus of Sri Aurobindo*, p. 27

² *S A B.C.L.*, Vol 5, p 6

by these bewitching presences of the mind-worlds. If it be so then young Aurobindo who was passing through his spiritual apprenticeship must have borne the sweet temptations and fairy-assaults of these goddess personalities. And if we take note of the capital in 'Love' and 'Graces' of the above lines, shall we not believe that the three heavenly Graces and the God of Love with his hordes of celestial nymphs are very real and near to the young poet? He feels,

The sense of nature living in the woods.¹

Again to quote K. D. Sethna — "The authentic mystical or spiritual vision shines out only on very rare occasions and then too it seldom does so in its own right: either traditional mythology serves as a medium or else love between man and woman interprets it through a self-transcending extremism that seeks to leap beyond the limits of earth"²

Though the poet never loses his hold on the earthly yet the whole atmosphere is suffused with some Unseen. Already to his eyes the universe has become the body of the Lord and he finds even in a lowly reed the conscious shaping touch:

Thee in the silver waters growing,
Arcadian Pan, strange whispers blowing
Into thy delicate stops, did teach
A language lovelier than speech³

To him nature is a compassionate sufferer along with the lovers. Its vast being weeps with a myriad eyes in their sorrow —

I think that nature heard our misery
Weep to itself and wept for sympathy.⁴

This long passage from the same poem —

Therefore I laid my cheek on the chill grass
And murmured "I am overborne with grief
And joy to richer natures hopes to pass.
Oh me! my life is like an aspen leaf
That shakes but will not fall. My thoughts are blind
And life so bitter that death seems almost kind.

How am I weary of the day's increase,
Of the moon's brightness and the splendid stars,
The sun that dies not, I would be at peace,
Nor blind my soul with images, nor force

¹ *S A B C L* Vol 5, p 10

² *The Poetic Genus of Sri Aurobindo*, p 27

³ *S A B C L* Vol 5, p 20

⁴ *Ibid*, p 22

My lips to mirth whose later taste is death,
Nor with vain utterance load my weary breath.¹

The vast ocean-like sorrow with an ordinary poet could have been taken as the wail of a wounded heart but if we look towards Sri Aurobindo's radiant future the surmise may not fall short of the mark that this futility is of human hopes against Fate. The phrase —

. . . we knew not Fate
In ambush by the solitary stream —²

is not an individual's pathetic cry before the bronze-faced Entity but is the load of all human sorrow, lying heavy on the shoulders of the poet which here he has interspersed with the starry heights and dark depths of a young heart's aspirations. He is painfully but purposefully aware of "Custom's usual night" ("The lost Deliverer") to which later he will deal a mortal blow by his unparalleled Tapasya. This strong preoccupation of the poet with sorrow, death and oblivion in poems like "Night by the Sea," "The Lover's Complaint," "Love in Sorrow" and "The Island Grave" makes us remember that at the tender age of thirteen the Mother in her occult dreams used to rise above the world and that the tired and weary of the earth used to shelter under her robe. We can assume that it is not truly an individual's but the whole humanity's sorrow expressed in these poems. Though Sri Aurobindo's path didn't lead him Buddha-like to some nihilistic Nirvana but to heights "radiant with the very face of God", this explorer of the Beyond has a tendency to wander in other vales too high or misty for the hold of mortals. He refers often to these "other shores", be it Lethe's oblivion or Eden's morns. K.D. Sethna aptly wrote about "Love and Death" and "Urvashie" that Sri Aurobindo's heroes represent "Earth's heart storming beyond to gain fulfilment, either by attaining the supra-terrestrial and remaining in its light or by invading the infra-terrestrial and reclaiming from its dark what it has snatched and submerged."³ This is true of Sri Aurobindo himself.

In *Songs to Myrtilla* the teenage poet may think for a moment of sinking in the oblivion of the infra-terrestrial, but he does not let the reader forget that there are other worlds and other realities. Even then the Avatar of immortality is conscious of the reign of death, of the brief interregnum called life and the sadness of it all. He who had descended to conquer death and change earth-nature into Divine Truth-Nature fully understood the transitory sad aspect of life. He stresses and brings into vivid focus the face of the ancient Adversary in two long poems. In the poem "Night by the Sea" even in the sweet enchantment of the lovers' proximity the poet cries out:

¹ *Ibid*

² *Ibid*

³ *The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo*, pp 27-28

Love, a moment drop thy hands;
 Night within my soul expands.
 Coral kisses ravish not
 When the soul is tinged with thought.¹

And what are the thoughts disturbing the felicity of the young poet?

What a voice of grief intrudes
 On these happy solitudes!¹
 To the wind that with him dwells
 Ocean, old historian, tells
 All the dreadful heart of tears
 Hidden in the pleasant years.²

The weight of finiteness and transitoriness of youth's tortures his pleasure in that passionate moment of love. He realises that countless others have played countless times this love-game on those very shores—

Here they saw the evening still
 Coming slowly from the hill
 And the patient stars arise
 To their outposts in the skies;
 Heard the ocean shoreward urge
 The speed and thunder of his surge,
 Singing heard as though a bee
 Noontide waters on the sea.³
 These no longer. . . .

The poet is not lamenting from a heart wounded by unrequited love, as in "The Lover's Complaint" but from the oppressive sense of life's brevity and of the cruel destiny of souls wandering in the everlasting Shadows—

We shall lose, ah me! too soon
 Lose the clear and silent moon,
 The serenities of night
 And the deeper evening light.
 We shall know not when the morn
 In the widening East is born,
 Never feel the west-wind stir,
 Spring's delightful messenger,
 Never under branches lain
 Dally with the sweet-lipped rain,

¹ *S A B C.L.*, Vol 5, pp 15-16

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid*, p 17

Watch the moments of the tree,
Nor know the sounds that tread the sea ¹

And where do these souls wander after their earthly soujourn is over?

“Are they blown as legends tell
In the smoke and gurge of hell?
Writhe they in relucet gyres
O'er a circle sad of fires?
In what lightless groves must they
Or un murmuring alleys stray?
Fields no sunlight visits, streams
Where no happy lotus gleams?
Yet, where'er their steps below,
Memories sweet for comrades go.
Lethe's waters had their will,
But the soul remembers still.”²

Time may forget those thus dead and gone but not the soul of our fiery poet. He in the very heart of felicity remembers mortality and maybe his young heart even unbeknownst to himself had already made the resolve to do the impossible and to defeat the inevitable—Death or Ananke.

(To be continued)

SHYAM KUMARI

¹ *Ibid*, p 18

² *Ibid*, pp 17-18

THAT GLIMMER

Ask not for that glimmer called love.
Friends, there are things much greater—
The flowering in us of the true and the golden,
The growing into an image of the divine Indweller.
Ask for the purity of a dew-drop on a lotus leaf,
The candid sweep of a child's rosy dreams.
And a high poise where all are one in the One.
The stars travel on their lonely ways, separated
From each other by immense space-gulfs,
Their greatness needs no boon-companion,
Yet together they perfect the beauty of night's heaven.

SHYAM KUMARI

THE SOUL OF A PLANT

This article from the Arya, Vol. I, No. 1, August 1914, starting on p. 49 under the general heading "Varieties" and the subtitle as above was first reproduced in the June issue of Mother India, 1955, pp. 22-27. There it was attributed to Sri Aurobindo. However, it was not included in the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, published in 1972, most probably because of a note signed by Nolini: "Not Sri Aurobindo's." Perhaps the note was prompted by what constitutes the major part of the article—the quotation in extenso from "one of the London dailies." But the nature of the prefatory and concluding remarks induces one to surmise that they were written by Sri Aurobindo himself. Even a small linguistic tell-tale sign is there: the use habitual to Sri Aurobindo of "farther" in preference to "further."

In any case Sri Aurobindo's care as editor of the Arya in utilising scientific results for matters mystical or spiritual is extremely relevant in the context of present-day discussions on such topics.

The title sounds like a phrase of idealistic or even fanciful poetry fit to precede some reverie or ethereal dream of the imagination; but actually it is no more than the final idea which naturally suggests itself after a perusal of the accounts given in English journals of the strictly controlled and severely careful experiments and results demonstrated by Dr. J.C. Bose in London and Vienna. This distinguished scientist was one of the earliest experimenters in that field of research which has brought about the use of wireless telegraphy. But he turned aside subsequently to a deeper line of original experiment and one likely to be more fruitful in its results to human knowledge. Following an absolutely original line, inventing his own apparatus, of the most simple yet subtle delicacy, and constructing them by the hands of Indian artisans, working without collaborators and with the smallest modicum of recognition by his fellow-scientists, he has pursued his investigations to a result so complete and impeccable that the scientists of Vienna are said to have exclaimed, when they saw his demonstrations, "You have left us nothing to do!" The nature of these results may be best understood by an interesting account in one of the London dailies which brings out very clearly the import of Dr. Bose's discoveries. They are of such importance that we think it well to quote the whole article *in extenso*

"In these days it seems to be impossible to live for more than a few weeks at a time without receiving some more or less serious mental shock. Soon after you have recovered from seeing an aeroplane weighing half a ton leave the ground, you are called on to make a mental adjustment which will reconcile you to travelling in a train hanging in mid-air, and in another day or two you may find yourself face to face with the adventure of speaking to someone fifty miles away without the aid even of a wire. It is getting a little difficult to keep up with Science.

"Just now Professor J.C. Bose—a Hindu scientist who has been sent by the

Government of India to lay the results of his discoveries before the Western scientific world—is giving people shocks in Maida Vale. If you watch his astonishing experiments with plants and flowers, you have to leave an old world behind and enter a new one. The world where plants are merely plants, becomes mercilessly out of date, and you are forced abruptly into a world where plants are almost human beings. Professor Bose makes you take the leap when he demonstrates that plants have a nervous system quite comparable with that of men, and makes them write down their life-story. So you step into yet another world.

“Perhaps the most amazing experiment is one showing the actual death of a plant. This does not sound very wonderful—but have you ever seen a plant die? You have seen it gradually die, fade and wither; but it actually died long before it faded. Have you ever seen it die abruptly, as a man dies? Have you seen the death-struggle of a plant? That is what Professor Bose shows you—and it is a disturbing thing to watch. It gives a plant a human quality.

“The experiment is not easy to describe; but this briefly what you see. In a darkened room you see a strip of light on the wall, and this light moves slowly to the left. Quite suddenly it hesitates and quivers and struggles, and then moves slowly to right. It is when the light hesitates and quivers and struggles that you are watching the death of the plant.

“One of the Professor’s great difficulties was to know how to kill a plant suddenly enough. When you pick a rose you kill it, but not abruptly. There is still a little nourishment for it in the stem, and its collapse is gradual. Such a death does not lend itself to dramatic demonstration. But Professor Bose found that water at a high temperature—say, 140 degrees Fahrenheit—would kill a plant suddenly, and he worked out a very ingenious way of showing this. First, he cuts the stem of a plant so that it forms a spiral, and on the outside of the spiral he fixes a little piece of glass which will reflect light that is thrown on to it. Then he puts the stem in warm water. Under the congenial influence of the warmth the tendency is for the stem of the plant to expand. It enjoys the stimulant of the warmth, just as a man will enjoy the stimulant of a hot bath, and it shows its appreciation by expanding.

“Being cut in the form of a spiral the stem is bound to turn slightly, as it expands, and this movement is thrown by the little piece of glass through a lens on to the wall. As the temperature of the water is gradually increased, the movement, shown so dramatically by the strip of light on the wall, increases. But there comes a moment when the heat of the water is too much for the plant—when, in fact, it is in danger of being scalded to death just as a man would be scalded if he were held in water which was gradually heated to boiling-point. And the plant’s nervous system collapses just as the man’s system would collapse. The strip of light on the wall pauses and quivers for a second, and then returns along its path. It has died suddenly—scalded to death—and the backward movement of the light is but a dramatic reproduction of the contraction of its body—that contraction which immediately follows death.”

So far the phenomena noted are those of vital activities associated with the physical states we call life and death; but then there come others which are usually associated with mental consciousness, so that the writer of the article is induced to use such phrases as "the feelings of plants," "the perception part of the plant," "the plant's power of perception".

"Other experiments showing the feeling of plants are equally surprising. Professor Bose employs a compulsive force which causes the plant to give an answering signal—a twitch in reply. These signals are automatically recorded on the delicate instruments the Professor has invented and the records reveal the hidden feelings of the plant. Some idea of the delicacy of the instruments may be gained from the fact that they can record a time interval so short as the 1,000th part of the duration of a heart-beat.

"The Professor connected a plant with the instrument, and then lightly struck one of the leaves. At once it was clear that the plant felt the blow. That is, its whole nervous system was affected, and its pulse, written down by the ingenious recorder, varied with the severity of the blow. The professor gave the plant a little stimulant. At once the height of the pulse was increased. It was given a depressing drug and the effect was quickly seen in the feebler beating of the pulse.

"There was something almost humiliating in this sensitiveness of a mere plant to the very same agents to which men and women respond. No one would object to a plant being refreshed by water; but what right has it to enjoy, as it were, a cup of tea? When Professor Bose gave the plant a dose of alcohol, its response through the recorder was ludicrously unsteady. One had the humiliation of watching a drunken plant. The plant is, indeed, always too 'brotherly.' Too much food makes it lethargic and incapable of reply, but the removal of the excess removes the lethargy.

"The resonant recorder indicates the time taken by the plant to perceive a shock, and here again there is considerable likeness to humanity, for a stoutish plant will give its response in a slow and lordly fashion, but a thin one attains the acme of its excitement in an incredibly short time—in the case of mimosa in the six-hundredth part of a second. The perception part of the plant becomes very sluggish under fatigue. When excessively tired or bored it loses for the time all power of perception, and requires a rest-cure of at least half an hour to restore its equanimity.

"That the too sheltered life is no better for plants than for man is suggested by another interesting experiment. A plant which was carefully protected under glass from outside blows looked most sleek and flourishing, but its conducting power was found atrophied or paralysed. Yet when a succession of blows were rained on this effete and bloated specimen, the stimulus canalized its own path of conduction, and the plant soon became more alert and responsive, and its nervous impulses were very much quickened.

"It is impossible for a spectator of the Professor's experiments to make any attempt to separate himself from the rest of life. In the matter of automatic heart-

beats the Indian plant *Desmodium Gyrans* shows remarkable activity, and Professor Bose, by obtaining records of these pulsations, shows that the throbbings in the plant are affected by external agents in precisely the same way as the heart-beats of an animal. Thus, in plant, as in animal life, the pulse-frequency is increased under the action of warmth and lessened under cold. Under ether the throbbing of the plant is arrested, but revival is possible when the vapour is blown off. Chloroform is more fatal. There is, too, an extraordinary parallelism in the fact that those poisons which arrest the beat of the heart in a particular way arrest the plant pulsation in a corresponding manner. Also, taking advantage of the antagonistic reactions of specific poisons, Professor Bose has been able to revive a poisoned leaf by the application of another counteracting poison.

“To find whether the plant varies in its state of responsiveness, Professor Bose has subjected *mimosa* (a plant especially sensitive and useful for this line of work) to uniform shocks repeated every hour of the day and night. And he was rewarded by the discovery that plants keep very late hours. Contrary to current views, the plant is awake till early in the morning, falling into deepest sleep between 6 and 9 a.m. when it becomes quite insensitive. It wakes gradually, and by noon is fully awake, becoming lethargic as the afternoon passes, to sleep again in the early morning.”

Finally, following out the inevitable suggestions of all these remarkable phenomena, the writer proceeds to draw the moral,—the lesson which Nature is always lying in wait to give to the self-confined egoism of man.

“The superiority of a man must, in fact, be established on a foundation more secure than sensibility. The most sensitive organ by which we can detect an electric current is our tongue. An average European can perceive a current as feeble as 6.4 microamperes (a microampere is a millionth part of the unit of current). Possibly the tongue of a Celt may be more excitable. But the plant *mimosa* is ten times more sensitive than this, and it is not in the case of a special plant that this sensitiveness is felt. Nothing could appear more stolid than the common radish. But under the persuasion of Professor Bose’s instruments it responds vigorously to stimuli.

“That the establishment of this similarity of responsive actions in the plant and animal will be found of the highest significance is evident from the enthusiastic reception of these discoveries at Oxford, Cambridge, London and Continental scientific centres. By study of the vegetable organisms the more complex physiological reactions of the human being may be understood. Thus, as Professor Bose says, community throughout the great ocean of life is seen to outweigh apparent dissimilarity. Diversity is swallowed up in unity.”

Diversity swallowed up in unity!—It might have been a phrase from some free rendering of an ancient Upanishad. But how much precisely are we justified in deducing from these results produced by the severest tests of physical research, accepted by the scientific opinion of Europe and considered by thinkers of distinction to be of great importance for the future development of the Science of Psy-

chology? Dr. Bose, then a young and unknown scientist, set out to prove the existence of nervous life in metals and plants by showing that they return precisely the same responses to the same stimuli as human beings. In the vegetable kingdom his thesis has been triumphantly proved. These are, obviously, successful experimental observations in the physiology of plants, their vital habits, their nervous responses, and we are now justified by them in saying that man and the plant are one body and one life. Can we go farther and say that they are also to a certain extent observations in plant psychology or that Dr. Bose has gone beyond his original thesis and established between man and the plant a unity of the incipient mind?

If we accept the method of the modern psychologists who hold the physical and the nervous life to be the basis and the material of mind, we are practically compelled to say, Yes. The responses of the plant are evidently identical with those which in man are translated in mental values as physical and nervous sensations; there is in the plant an incipient mind, a rudimentary soul; for it not only lives and dies, wakes and sleeps, but it makes the responses which in us would be pleasure and pain. Is there nothing, then, in the plant which corresponds to the perceptive element in man? Has it, if we may say so, nervous sensation only and not mental perception? Naturally, a rudimentary organisation of perceptive faculty which not being coupled with conception, the second of the two bright horses of Indra, would not imply a self-conscious Ego.

Scientifically, perhaps, we are not warranted to go so far, but that intuitive logic which is, after all, as often justified by result as the experimental, certainly demands the presence of such a faculty, however much it may linger on the verge of the sub-conscious. The question, at any rate, is raised irresistibly by Dr. Bose's experiments and demands a solution. It is doubtful, however, whether it can ever be solved by any method which comes within the limits of scientific orthodoxy. We reach a border-line where the demands of increasing knowledge begin to cry out for an enlargement in the means and methods of enquiry.

In any case, a great step has been made towards the unification of knowledge. A bridge has been built between man and inert matter. Even, if we take Dr. Bose's experiments with metals in conjunction with his experiments on plants, we may hold it to be practically proved for the thinker that Life in various degrees of manifestation and organisation is omnipresent in Matter and is no foreign introduction or accidental development, but was always there to be evolved. Mind, which modern Science has not yet begun rightly to investigate, awaits its turn.

The ancient thinkers knew well that life and mind exist everywhere in essence and vary only by the degree and manner of their emergence and functionings. All is in all and it is out of the complete involution that the complete evolution progressively appears. It is only appropriate that for a descendant of the race of ancient thinkers who formulated that knowledge, should be reserved the privilege of initiating one of the most important among the many discoveries by which experimental Science is confirming the wisdom of his forefathers.

PUJALAL — THE MOTHER'S POET

One of the oldest sadhaks, Pujalal passed almost his entire life-span in the Ashram except for a very short spell when he had to go back to Gujarat on some business. He was one of the few fortunate sadhaks to be present on 24th November 1926, the Victory Day as it is known now.

At the beginning we were acquainted with each other only by name. Our spheres of activity had nothing in common. I had heard that he was a Gujarati poet and Sri Aurobindo once mentioned his name to me regarding his poetry. I remember one early incident. Some of us had gone for a sea-bath; Purani and Pujalal had joined the party. We thought of swimming back to the shore from the further end of the old Pier — quite a long distance to cover. Midway from the Pier Pujalal found himself in great difficulty. It seemed both his arms had come out of the sockets of his shoulder-joints and could not, as a result, make swimming movements. Purani came to learn of his precarious condition and, swimming back, carried Pujalal on his back to the shore. That was the end of the poet's outdoor pleasures. Since then he had to confine himself to intellectual pursuits and the daily jobs assigned to him by the Mother. One of them was sweeping the rooms on the first floor of Sri Aurobindo's building or, as it is called, the Meditation House. He was also given the charge of the Mother's bathroom which he kept meticulously clean.

It was at this time that I moved close to him. Coming in and out of Sri Aurobindo's room I would see him sweeping the corridor and exchange smiles. We were then attending on Sri Aurobindo. Strange it was to find Pujalal composing short poems in English in the midst of his sweeping work. He would suddenly stop the sweeping, take up pen and paper and dash down an English lyric while the Mother was seeing visitors at the door-way nearby and wishing them bon-jour, au revoir, bonne fête, etc. His compositions were woven round these themes, among others. The poems were handed to the Mother and she would carry them to Sri Aurobindo. I had to read them to him. They were very simple, sweet and spontaneous. The choice of words, the rhythm, all had a definite psychic touch. I believe it was because of these qualities that the Mother took a special interest in them and had them seen by Sri Aurobindo. For Sri Aurobindo had stopped seeing any poetry by sadhaks at that time except by Dilip and Amal. At this time I came to know that Pujalal was considered the Mother's poet. These poems were later on published in book-form.

He carried on his 'upstairs' duties for a number of years till he had to give them up due to some physical trouble. He was given a room in the main Ashram compound. Now he devoted himself exclusively to literary pursuits. For a short time he was teaching Sanskrit in the Centre of Education. Now our contact became more frequent. I used always to see him sitting neatly dressed before his desk and busy writing away. Now and then I was tempted to drop in and ask him what he was composing. It was a surprise to hear that he was occupied with the gigantic

task of translating *Savitri* into Gujarati. On my inquiry, he told me that he was doing it in many metres, not in one single metre as in the original, for that would sound too monotonous in Gujarati and that the moods of the different books of the epic suggested different rhythms. Occasionally he would drop into my room or call me to explain to him some intricate verses of *Savitri*.

While on the subject of literature, I must admire his complete dedication to it, either composing original poems or translating Sri Aurobindo's poetical works, eschewing all other physical enjoyments. He had been pushed to it because of his physical disabilities. He began to suffer from one ailment after another, but no suffering could stop him from writing nor affect his ever-cheerful temperament. As soon as he became all right we would see him at his old desk. Luckily for him, he had a good doctor-friend in Dr. Sourin Bose who was always at his service and took no end of care and trouble for his sake. Pujalal had also a brother's love for him and was ever grateful for his loving ministry. In this context I cannot but recall my poet-friend Nishikanto who also fell a victim to a host of maladies but never lost his jovial mood. Death had no sting for him.

Pujalal had a number of children for friends who would flock to him to learn simple Sanskrit slokas by heart and recite them before him. At one time I also tried to take Sanskrit lessons from him, but I frankly made a condition that grammar and conjugation would be too onerous a task for me. I could not, however, proceed very far.

As years rolled on, his ailments increased. Dr. Bose having passed away, he was taken care of by Dr. Raichura and Dr. Datta, and his unfailing sisterly nurse Sarala. I wonder how the Divine Mother arranges everything marvellously administering to our comfort and well-being. I don't know how Sarala came to him, they being strangers to each other. It was the Mother's sheer act of Grace that made it possible. Lallubhai was another stand-by and an ever-ready help. He was also surrounded by Gujarati friends in the evening to give him company.

Pujalal has been an object-lesson to me and to many others. He had shown how in spite of serious physical disabilities one could endure, keep up a serenely sweet spirit and go on with one's vocation till the last. The great Samata that he had attained in his soul was certainly no mean achievement and was the result of his life-long sadhana and devotion to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. His name Pujalal meaning worship is amply justified.

In conclusion, I have heard it said that during the French Revolution he had helped the Mother at some critical point. This throws a significant light on the pilgrimage of his soul towards the supreme Light embodied on earth by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

NIRODBARAN

AT THE MESSAGE CLINIC IN KERALA

SOME NOTES BY CHAMPAKLAL

To Dr. S. Varier,

When we saw you, we were very happy to learn that you would start the treatment on an auspicious day. And we also learnt from others that the Chief Physician himself would come, do some puja, and after that the treatment would start. This news made us more happy and we remembered what you had said on the very first day, 29.8.1980, at 11 a.m.:

“I have made your case-history and done my work, — prescribed the treatment. But I don’t say anything. It is because curing is not in my hands. It is in the hands of the Supreme above. I shall only pray for you, and pray to be a tool of the Supreme. Even a simple common cold — I can’t say I will cure. I just do His work. as His instrument. Everything is in His hands.”

If this is not correct. I request you to correct it or if something is left out, please add.

(Dr. Varier’s reply:

“This is not only what we believe but this is also our experience.”)

On the first day, I saw you coming into the massage-room. The auspicious lamp was lit and in front of that some ceremony was done. What I understood and felt then was that this ceremony was the invocation of the Deity. Now this room became like a temple. So one who is doing massaging here ought to respect this room and do the massaging very quietly, and speak just what is required for the work.

But what is happening? The first day they did not chat so much but from the next day all the time while massaging they chatted as if that also was a part of the massage-treatment, just near our ears and one had to hear them without knowing the language. And not in a low voice, the talks went on freely in a loud voice. Even at the time of Kamalaben’s massage the girls talked so loudly that I heard their chatting all the time. I did not say anything because if they stopped talking and did massaging it might be boring for them.

But what about the patient? He has to bear all this. The way of massaging is not too tiring, it is just rubbing the body with oil. I could endure all these days, but today I have felt like running away from this place. I have controlled myself, for if I went away, they would think I was sick and I could not bear the massage. But, by the Grace of the Divine, it is not so.

I do not say that they are not doing their work properly, they do their job all right, but they do not know what kind of an atmosphere they create by talking all the time. One who has a little knowledge and some feeling, he only can know. This is not to complain against any person. They are nice. Only, I find they have no idea about the right thing.

Today (16.9.1980), this is what has happened: I made some sign to them not

to talk. I had no right to say anything to your workers, but I did that. Kindly excuse me for this. If they do massage very quietly with some feeling, that will be much more effective.

All this Ramayana I have written not as a complaint. At present in our part of the country, there is a labour problem. Here I do not know the situation. Of course, there are some places where there is no such problem and the workers are happy with their employers. If you have the same problem here, then I have nothing to say. We have to bear all this. However, if they do the massage with a certain attitude, it will be very effective.

17.9.1980

Today Kamalaben went for her massage and again they started chatting as if it were a part of the treatment. They spoke in a very loud voice. Instinctively, I clapped my hands thrice. The result was that they became very quiet. When Kamalaben came back I asked her and she replied that she had told them: "Ayya, by clapping his hands, says to me and to you all to remember God and not to talk." One of the girls said: "How can one remain without talking?" Another asked: "Can we speak a little?" Kamalaben told them: "When it is required, surely you can." Kamalaben explained to them: "We have done puja, God is present here and we ought not to talk," and they agreed. Kamalaben told me that once when she had put her foot first on the massage tray, they had pointed out, "No, no, Amma, you cannot put your foot first, sit and then put your legs inside." From this, it seemed they were not conscious of what they were doing. For them, talking was natural. All this I learnt after my massage.

When I went for my massage, I first enquired by a sign how they were. When I enquired, it was not merely a gesture, but from my heart with the best wishes for them. Next, I folded my hands to each of them, but this was to the Supreme in them. Then I prayed: "Lord, you will make them your instruments so that they may do what you wish." After this, I made a sign to them not to talk but to think of the Supreme alone. They understood. One person explained to the others in their language what I had meant, and they were happy. Now the Supreme Force worked. The result was wonderful. The massage was so nice. Never before had they massaged like that. They specially attended to both the legs. If the massage had been done always like that and if even then I had not been cured, I would have said: "It is not that the treatment has not cured me, but it is the Supreme's Will and I accept it joyfully, not mentally but from my heart."

But the mind always finds some reason. I thought perhaps the doctor might have instructed them to pay special attention to my knee. I wanted to know the fact. So after my massage, I enquired of the massage-men through Prapattibhai, whether the Doctor had given any special instruction to them for my knee-massage. The massage-men replied: "No." Here is the proof of how the Supreme Force works, and without receiving any instruction how wonderfully they have massaged today. Before, when I lay flat, I felt nice but when I turned on my sto-

mach, it was not comfortable. But today it has not been so. Today I have not noticed even how the time passed. It has been very nice.

It so happened that in the course of the day the Chief Physician came and asked as usual: "OK?" Formerly I used to reply: "Yes", and that answer was for my inner condition. Now somehow I thought the Chief Physician would ask me about my physical condition and I must state the fact. He did ask me about my leg. I answered: "Very stiff while walking, but while sitting, no pain."

MANAS-SAROVAR

Along Brahma's lake we walked and sang,
Beheld Kailash's smiling form,
And felt supernal presences gliding past
Twixt mountains snow-strewn.

Birds winged through an inner air
Whose songs unstained by hardship's note
Lured the spirit to freedom transcendent,
Where failed all human cries.

The pure magnificence of Shiva's lair
Drew our eyes that yet saw not,
An argent crystal proud above cloud and wind,
A soul-intimate sight of deathless calm.

We heard God call,
Wandered through hailstorm-scream,
Bruised bodies flitting in Spirit's night,
Where a lone soul-beam pierced the dark.

Human, we dwelt touched by the unutterable,
Thoughts failed at boundaries unknown
And sight fled into the Unseen.
The audible widened into white silence.

So sheer we saw, so sheer we lived,
Unbounded and swift along immortal shores,
Where Creation once trembled in first-born Light
Against the huge background of tremendous Night.

An Ascetic high, unmoving, bare,
Ganges-ringed and reptile-clad,
Blue from the oblation of the poisonous surge,
Vast as the azure yet unborn,

Silently benign, a majesty inscrutable
Overlighting our steps, drew us near
And cast its Soul into our meandering ways
Like laughter eternal flowing in golden streams.

ARVIND HABBU

Author's Note

This was written on 18.7.1985 at Jivo in Tibet, at the Manas-sarovar base. What is incredible about our trip is that we were at Manas on 15.7 1985 on Monday (Somvar—Shiva's Day) which was also the new-moon night (Shiva's night, during which He is believed to come down from Kailash to bathe in the Lake). Further, it was the Purushottam-month (the extra month which is added every 3 years to the Hindu lunar calendar), a very auspicious month. Moreover, this time, as every 36 years, it was in the month of Shravan which is Shiva's month.

A LIGHT THROUGH THE MIST

In the pitch-dark stillness of a night
 Heavens swoop down on earth in stealth
 To hold a secret parley on domineering fate
 Fixed, predetermined and yet fluidly facile.
 A charged expectancy runs through the veins of creation.
 The stars ever awake to know their lot
 Twirl and twinkle torment
 Mountains stand seemingly steadfast questioning the sky.
 Rivers meander aimless in woods and plains
 In quest of sea-deeps that conceal their destiny.
 With them I join hands in a bewildered grip.
 What was I, what am I, what will I be?
 Fiery furnace my head,—question burning at white heat.
 The rumbling of the waves so long a non-sound
 Become vocal in surges and gurgles.
 Your fate is your echo rebounded
 From the granite walls of eternity.
 Fate is the firm bed-rock of possibilities
 Rooted deep in things and men.
 The egg laid by a peacock is not a peacock,
 It only holds the prospect of the bird of beauty,
 Just as a man born treasures the spark of God-hood.

DEBANSHU

THE SONG OF THE LORD

THE GITA WITHOUT COMMENT

(Continued from the issue of September 1986)

Chapter XII

- 1 Arjuna said:
“Those devotees in constant union who seek shelter in You, or those who seek the Imperishable, the Unmanifest. who of these have more knowledge of Yoga?”
2. The Lord said:
“Those whose mind is fixed on Me, who are always united with and serve Me, endowed with supreme trust in Me, these I consider to have more knowledge of Yoga
3. But those who seek the Imperishable, the Unmanifest, the Unplaced, the Omnipresent, the Unthinkable, the Unchanging, the Unmoving, the Fixed,
4. who have restrained all the senses, everywhere equal-minded, pleased by the welfare of all, they indeed attain Me.
5. The difficulty is greater for those whose minds pursue the Unmanifest The goal of the Unmanifest is reached with pain for those in a body.
6. But one who places all his actions in Me, with Me as supreme, unswervingly concentrated in Yoga, he serves Me.
7. For him I soon become the saviour from the sea of cyclic death, O Pārtha, whose consciousness is turned to Me.
8. Fix the mind on Me. Place the intelligence in Me. Surely you shall live in Me alone, above all this.
9. If you are not able to offer always your consciousness, then seek to reach Me through the Yoga of discipline.
10. If you are incapable of discipline, work for Me as supreme. While doing work for Me, you shall reach perfection.
11. If you are also unable to do this, then take refuge in My Yoga. Offering the results of all action, act, self-contained.
12. Better indeed is knowledge than Discipline, than Knowledge Concentration, than Concentration the offering of the results of action. From offering there is instant peace.
13. Hating no being, friendly, compassionate, without possessiveness, without egoism, equal in suffering and happiness, forgiving,
14. contented, constant in Yoga, self-contained, firmly resolved, mind and intelligence given to Me, one who is devoted to Me, to Me he is dear.
15. By whom the world is not afflicted and who does not afflict the world, who is free from excitement, envy, fear and anxiety, to Me he is dear.

16. Without expectation, pure, careful, unconcerned, untroubled, who offers all efforts, who is My devotee, to Me he is dear
17. Who rejoices not, nor grieves, nor hopes, who offers fortune and misfortune, full of devotion, to Me he is dear.
18. Equal to enemy and friend and in honour and infamy, in cold, heat, pleasure, pain, beyond attachment, equal
19. in praise and blame, silent, content with all that comes, homeless, firm-minded, full of devotion, to Me that man is dear.
20. Truly, those who follow this immortal dharma here described, imbued with faith, with Me as supreme, devoted, to Me are exceedingly dear.

OM TAT SAT

Here ends the twelfth chapter called 'The Yoga of-Devotion' in the dialogue of Sri Krishna and Arjuna, in Brahman-Knowledge, in Yoga-Discipline, in the Divine Songs of the Upanishads.

Chapter XIII

*Arjuna said:

“Prakriti, Purusha, the Field and its Knower, Knowledge and the Known—these I wish to understand, O Keshava.”

1. The Lord said:
“This body is called ‘the Field’, O Kaunteya. One who knows this is called ‘the knower of the Field’ by those with knowledge.
2. Know Me as the knower of the Field of all Fields, O Bhārata. The knowledge of the Field and its Knower is considered by Me as true knowledge.
3. Hear briefly from Me about the Field, what its changes are, its Source, who He is (who knows it) and His powers
4. This has been sung in many chants by Rishis, in verses from the Brahma Sutra with conclusive logic.
5. The Five Elements, ego, intelligence, also what is unmanifest, the ten senses, one (mind) and the five objects of sense,
6. wants, hatred, pleasure, pain, permutations, consciousness, persistence—these are the Field and its changes, briefly described.
7. Humility, unpretentiousness, harmlessness, forgiveness, candidness, serving the teacher, purity, steadfastness, self-control,
8. absence of longing for sense objects, non-egoism, a clear perception of the darkness of birth, death, old age, sickness, pain,

*The inclusion of this verse is still disputed. It is included here, but not given a number

9. non-attachment, unidentified with son, wife, home and so on, with a constant even-mindedness amidst what is wanted or not wanted.
10. unswerving devotion to Me, an undistracted Yoga, resorting to solitary places, a distaste for crowds of people,
11. constancy in Self-knowledge, a vision of the purpose of essential knowing, this is called Knowledge. What is opposed to it is ignorance.
12. I shall describe that Knowledge by which one obtains immortality—the beginningless Supreme Brahman—called neither Being nor non-Being.
13. Hands and feet everywhere, eyes, head, mouth everywhere, ears everywhere: That stands enveloping all the world.
14. Shining through the functions of the senses, yet without senses, unattached yet supporting all, without qualities yet the enjoyer of qualities,
15. outside yet inside existence, unmoving yet moving, incomprehensively subtle, it is far yet so near.
16. He is undivided yet seems divided in existence, the sustainer of creation, That to be known, the devourer, the Creator.
17. Of lights it is called the light from beyond darkness, the Knowledge to be known—the goal of Knowledge—seated in the heart of all.
18. Thus the Field, Knowledge and the Knowable have been briefly described. Knowing this My devotee enters My Being.
19. Know Prakriti and Purusha as both without beginning. Know also that the changes and the Gunas are born of Prakriti.
20. Of the creation of body and sense Prakriti is said to be the cause. Of pleasure and pain, of experience, Purusha is said to be the cause.
21. The Purusha seated within Prakriti enjoys the Gunas born of Prakriti. The attachment to the Gunas is the cause of his birth from good and bad wombs.
22. The Witness, the Approver, the Sustainer, the Enjoyer, the Great Lord, the Supreme Self—thus is the Supreme Purusha described in this body.
23. One who knows fully in this way the Purusha, Prakriti and the Gunas while living, he is not born again
24. By concentration in the Self some see the Self by means of the Self, others by the Yoga of Knowledge, others by the Yoga of Action.
25. But others, not knowing, have heard. They also serve and thus cross beyond death devoted to the Sruti as Supreme.
26. Whatever is born—anything static or dynamic—know that to be from the union of the Field and its Knower, O Best of the Bhāratas.
27. One who sees the Supreme Lord stationed equally in all existences, the Undying in that which dies, he sees.
28. Seeing the Lord equally placed everywhere, not destroying the Self by the self, he goes to the supreme Goal.
29. One who sees all actions as done by Prakriti alone, and the Self as actionless, he sees.
30. When he perceives the diversity of created things as resting in Oneness and

evolving from That alone, then he realises the Brahman.

31. Without beginning, without qualities, this Supreme Self, though placed in a body, is Imperishable, O Kaunteya. It neither acts nor is it stained.
32. As from its subtlety, the all-pervading ether is not defiled, so the Self being everywhere in the body is not stained.
33. As the one sun illumines the whole world, so the Lord of the Field illumines the whole Field, O Bhārata.
34. Those who understand through the eye of Knowledge the distinction between the Field and its Knower, they go to the Highest.

OM TAT SAT

Here ends the thirteenth chapter called 'The Yoga of the Discrimination of the Field and its Knower' in the Dialogue of Śrī Kṛishna and Arjuna, in Brahman-Knowledge, in Yoga-Discipline, in the Divine Songs of the Upanishads.

Translated by DHRUVA

JUNG'S RELEVANCE TO INDIA

“COMING TO TERMS WITH THE UNCONSCIOUS” AS A WAY TO WHOLENESS IN LIFE

Coming to terms with the Unconscious is possibly the highest principle of life and action for Jung and the Jungian Analysts. The Unconscious is the last determinant of our life. It is the repository of the past experiences of the individual as well as of the race. The archetypes, *i.e.*, the primordial motivations of the race, the essential polarities of the Conscious and the Unconscious, the male and the female, the ego and the counter-ego or the shadow and other psychological factors all belong to the racial and the universal Unconscious. The soul and the god-image are also its contents.

Neurosis or mental disorder is a relative maladjustment in the organisation of the Unconscious and the Conscious. The cure of the neurosis consists in discovering and becoming conscious of the maladjustment and getting a proper reorientation of the entire situation. That means 'Coming to terms with the Unconscious'.

When in the course of the Analysis through an experience of the Self the patient seeks wholeness in life, a total harmony and unification, he is still coming to terms with the Unconscious, although now in a larger and a fuller sense.

Thus 'coming to terms with the Unconscious' becomes for Jungian therapy the guiding principle.

Now, is it not true that in all this process of adjustment and harmonisation we are really seeking a contact and a unification with the wholeness of life and existence, conceived as an ideal or a fact of reality? In doing so we concentrate on the future possibility which means a progressive withdrawal from the past entanglements, contradictory identifications and confusions of life, and grow into a wholeness more and more. In this process the past formations are bound to rise into consciousness but under the impact of our concentration on wholeness and its luminosity the past obscurities have a relatively easier liquidation and absorption into the luminosity of the wholeness of life.

This is virtually the way of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for growing into the wholeness of life or divine living.

Past Karmas are a bondage, which bind us to the past and the working of the lower nature of divided living, of love and hate, of good and evil, of transient joys and sorrows. To concentrate on the wholeness of absolute good, of light without shadows, of eternal truth above separative past, present and future, is the surest way of release from the past and of emerging into the whole and the unconditioned.

There can be a test of the efficacy of this method and approach too. We live in a world of relativities, a world of conditioned objects. We may try mentally as best we can to withdraw from these finite objects and turn towards the condition-

ed, the limitless and the infinite. After some practice we can succeed in turning towards the vast and the unlimited. We may then see whether we are in a state of relative freedom or not. That experience can afford the joy of a new discovery, of finding a way of becoming free from the past and the unconscious, which has always exercised a governing power over us and under whose persuasive influence we have felt helpless. That is the way how the Karmas can be annihilated and a long past wiped out confidently, though progressively.

The dimensions of the spirit in man are many. The foregoing is one approach. If we become conscious of the soul within us, the self-existent consciousness in the heart, the evolving spiritual principle, called by Integral Yoga the Psychic Being, then we have another approach to the unconscious. The luminosity of the psychic being is a steady and firm light unquenchable by any obscurity. It carries in it the confidence to face the unconscious, penetrates it and progressively illumines it.

Thus, for the Integral Yoga there are two approaches, one of the Divine Consciousness from Above and the other of the Psychic Being from Within. And in both cases self-existent consciousness accepts to transform the Unconsciousness into luminosity. That is the Integral Yoga's way of coming to terms with the unconscious. Of course, there is also the way of delving straight into it, but that is hazardous. The other two approaches may take longer, but they are safer.

For confirmation and further elucidation we may read a few passages from Integral Yoga as also from Jungian Thought.

At first from Jungian Analysts:

1. "The task of coming to terms with his philosophy of life is one which Psychotherapy inevitably sets itself, even though not every patient probes to the deepest levels. The art of Psychotherapy requires that the therapist should be in possession of an ultimate conviction which can be stated, which is credible and defensible, and which has proved its validity by the fact that it either has resolved any neurotic dissociations of his own or has never let them develop."¹

2. "It is not the neurosis which is the object of the therapy but the person who has the neurosis. A heart neurosis, for instance, as we have known for some time, does not arise from the heart, as the ancient mythology of medicine would have it, but from the soul of the sufferer. It arises not from some dark corner of the unconscious, as many Psychotherapists still try to believe, but from the whole person's years and tens of years of living and experiencing, and finally not only from this single life but also from the Psychic experience of the family or even of the social group."²

3. "Neurosis is integrally bound up with the problem of our time, and actually demonstrates the unsuccessful effort of the individual to solve in himself what is essentially a universal problem. Neurosis is division from the Self."³

¹ C G Jung, *Psychological Reflections*, Broadway House, London, p 79

² *Ibid*, p 77

³ *Ibid*, pp 75-6,

4. "Jungian analysis takes place within a dialectical relationship between two persons, analyst and analysand, and has for its goal the analysand's coming to terms with the unconscious: the analysand is meant to gain insight into the specific Unconscious structures and dynamics that emerge during analysis, and the structures underlying ego-consciousness are meant to change in their dynamic relation to other more unconscious structures and dynamics."¹

Here are now a few words of Sri Aurobindo bearing on the subject:

1. "If one wishes to purify and transform the nature, it is the power of these higher ranges to which one must open and raise to them and change by them both the subliminal and the surface being. Even this should be done with care, not prematurely or rashly, following a higher guidance, keeping always the right attitude; for otherwise the force that is drawn down may be too strong for an obscure and weak frame of nature. But to begin by opening up the lower subconscious, risking to raise up all that is foul or obscure in it, is to go out of one's way to invite trouble. First, one should make the higher mind and vital strong and firm and full of light and peace from above; afterwards one can open or even dive into the subconscious with more safety and some chance of a rapid and successful change."²

2. "The process of raising up the lower movements into the full light of consciousness in order to know and deal with them is inevitable; for there can be no complete change without it. But it can truly succeed only when a higher light and force are sufficiently at work to overcome, sooner or later, the force of the tendency that is held up for change"³

INDRA SEN

¹ *Jungian Analysis*, Shambhala, London, p 29

² *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 24, pp. 1606-7

³ *Ibid*, p 1607

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Talks with Sri Aurobindo — *Nirodbaran*

VOL. I— Published by Sri Aurobindo Society, Calcutta. Pages:

VIII + 300 Price: Rs.40/=

VOLS. II & III (combined in one volume)— Published by Sri Aurobindo Society, Madras. Pages: 426. Price: Rs. 65/=

On the evening of November 23, 1938 Pondicherry, the cave of Sri Aurobindo's tapasya, was thronged with the disciples and admirers of the Uttara Yogi from various parts of India and abroad. Time, the subtle thief of youth, was a bit lethargic on that day and was actually testing the patience of everyone who had gathered there. They were eagerly awaiting the day to dawn. And they longed to have the darshan of their master and guide after a tedious wait of three months.

The day did dawn. But it brought with it the unexpected news that shattered all hope and enthusiasm of the thousands of people. In the small hours of the morning Sri Aurobindo on his way to the bathroom had stumbled over a tiger skin and sustained a fracture in the right thigh bone. The devotees had no way but to go back sullen-hearted with the fervent prayer addressed to the Mother and the Lord for his speedy recovery.

But what are such accidents to yogis like Sri Aurobindo? He was not in the least perturbed though he had to make a break in his routine duties. And the forced rest of the master was a blessing in disguise to Nirodbaran, Sri Aurobindo's amanuensis. Accompanied by Dr Manilal, A.B. Purani, Dr Becharlal, Champaklal, Dr Satyendra and Mulshankar, Nirodbaran formed a ring around Sri Aurobindo lying in his bed. And the result is the two volumes—the offspring of Nirodbaran's notebooks in which he faithfully recorded the conversations the band had with Sri Aurobindo dating from December 10, 1938 to May 27, 1940.

In the first volume Nirodbaran narrates in brief before the beginning of every conversation the incidents which prompted their talk and the turn it took. Had he continued to do so in the second and the third volumes, it would have added to the work. In the first half of Volume I the Mother is an active participant in the conversation while in Volumes II & III she is rarely heard of. It may be because her own work kept her away. And in most places the Mother seems only a passerby and to quote Nirodbaran, "Just at this point the Mother came and the talk was suspended." Volume I consists of talks that took place in the evening but the rest of the volumes contain the evening as well as the morning talks. At times there is a little lull in the talk. Sometimes Sri Aurobindo keeps silent giving no answer. At times they find very little or nothing to talk about, for nobody appears to be in the mood. Yet someone suddenly tries to set the ball rolling.

The subjects taken for discussion range from the thefts committed in the Ashram to the military genius of Napoleon. Not only Homeopathy and its

miraculous cures, theosophy and Madame Blavatsky, corruption in Chicago and France, poetry and meditation, baldness and hair growth, birth control and Gandhi trigger their conversations but also gatekeepers in the Ashram, the chemical ingredients of honey, Sikhs and Gurkhas, German mystics and French saints, conquest of Death and the rumour in Pondicherry about the lot of money stored in the Ashram. The poetry of Sri Aurobindo, Tagore, Amal, Francois Villon, Nishikanto, Armando Menezes and the Surrealists are discussed with understanding and scholarship.

We get to know about the inimitable powers of the Japanese like self-sacrifice and self-control, poisoning of Dayanand Saraswati by his cook, the effect of fasting on yoga, the Germans discovering some new methods of capturing forts and the symbolism in *Savitri*. We are delighted to hear about a horse that can do mathematical calculations, a blind sadhu who could recognize by sound whether it was a one-anna coin or a two-anna one, an American who mistook the Sri Aurobindo Ashram for a person, Carlyle who spoke profusely on the value of silence and Hitler as a sort of perverted mystic. In fact, not a page can you flip without it lighting a smile on your face. Sometimes you break into a guffaw with the words of Sri Aurobindo who is full of humour. Even subjects that may sound taboo to solemn ears are frankly discussed. Don't they throw light on the Yogi's words: "All life is yoga"?

If you like to know answers to questions like What happens when the human consciousness is replaced by the divine consciousness?; What are vampires?; What is the significance of the Son, the Father and the Holy Ghost?; What is the difference between 'creative' and 'expressive' in poetry? and many more such difficult-to-answer conundrums—your desire will be fulfilled.

You must appreciate Nirodbaran for recording talks that would easily carry you away to a different realm—such as the lively discussions on poetry (January 17, 1940). You may also find fault with him for not deleting ordinary exchanges like the beginning on November 22, 1939. But even trivia connected with a Mahayogi like Sri Aurobindo may carry home something of his joyous no less than salvific presence.

P. RAJA

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Sixtieth Seminar: 27 April 1986

WHAT IS THE SECRET OF SUCCESS IN SADHANA?

Speech by ARAVIND AKKI

The aim of all sadhana or yogic endeavour is union with the Divine. But the paths are varied. Each one has to choose the path suitable to his nature and temperament. But whatever may be the path chosen, there are certain indispensable conditions to be fulfilled if one is to succeed in it. As Sri Aurobindo elucidates, "Sadhana means the purification of the nature, the consecration of the being, the opening of the psychic and the inner mind and vital, the contact and presence of the Divine, the realisation of the Divine in all things, surrender, devotion, the widening of the consciousness into the cosmic consciousness, the Self one in all, the psychic and the spiritual transformation of the nature."¹ But to realise all these is not at all an easy thing; it needs a prolonged and arduous self-discipline of which certain conditions are essential. So the Mother has said most succinctly: "Sadhana = Yogic discipline."²

In my speech, I propose to dwell briefly upon three conditions of this yogic discipline which seem to me essential and therefore together they can be called the triple secret of sadhana. These are: sincerity, faith and surrender.

In a sense sincerity is the most essential condition because all the others depend on it for their effectivity. It can be compared to the trunk of a tree while all other qualities can be compared to its branches. It is for this reason that the Mother has said: "Sincerity is the key of the divine doors."³ This key can unlock all the spiritual mysteries which we seek for in yoga.

What does sincerity mean? In the Mother's words: "Sincerity exacts the unification and harmonisation of the whole being in all its parts and movements around the central Divine Will."⁴

"To be sincere, all the parts of the being must be united in their aspiration for the Divine — not that one part wants and others refuse or revolt. To be sincere in the aspiration — to want the Divine for the Divine's sake, not for fame or name or prestige or power or any satisfaction of vanity."⁵

The Mother has also explained the paramount importance of sincerity in the following passage:

"Sincerity is the basis of all true realisation, it is the means, the path — and it is also the goal. Without it you are sure to make innumerable blunders and you

¹ *Letters on Yoga* (Cen Ed., Vol 24), p 1271

² *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cen Ed., Vol 14), p 32

³ *Ibid*, p 67

⁴ *Ibid*.

⁵ *Ibid*

have constantly to redress the harm you have done to yourself and to others.

“There is, besides, a marvellous joy in being sincere. Every act of sincerity carries in itself its own reward: the feeling of purification, of soaring upwards, of liberation one gets when one has rejected even one tiny particle of falsehood.

“Sincerity is the safeguard, the protection, the guide, and finally the transforming power”¹

Because sincerity has this realising power, all sincere aspiration is fulfilled and all sincere prayers are answered. As the Bible says: “Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.”²

Sincerity thus can be said to be the secret of success in sadhana because if we are totally sincere we are bound to arrive sooner or later at the integral divine realisation.

*

Equally indispensable as sincerity is faith or *śraddhā*. Today in a world full of scepticism and disbelief we have forgotten the great value of faith. But man needs faith to sustain confidence in himself and to succeed not only in yoga but in any great endeavour he undertakes in life.

What is faith? According to the Mother, “Faith is spontaneous knowledge in the psychic,”³ and she adds, “Faith is a certitude which is not necessarily based on experience and knowledge.”⁴ Sri Aurobindo also says, “Faith is a thing that precedes knowledge, not comes after knowledge. It is a glimpse of a truth which the mind has not yet seized as knowledge.”⁵ Explaining the fundamental importance of soul-faith Sri Aurobindo remarks, “It is so central and essential a thing that the Gita can justly say of it that whatever is a man’s *śraddhā*, that he is, *yo yacchraddhah sa eva saḥ*, and, it may be added, whatever he has the faith to see as possible in himself and strive for, that he can create and become.”⁶ Such is the dynamic realising power of faith and there is no end to one’s achievements in the spiritual adventure.

It is better to have even what is sometimes called a “blind faith” (though it is really not “blind”) than to go on arguing and doubting at every step. Jesus Christ said, “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”⁷

I shall illustrate this point by narrating a story. Once a man came to a Sadhu and requested him to give some spiritual instruction. The Sadhu told him, “Love God with all your heart, mind and soul.” But the man replied, “Sir, I do not know

¹ *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cen Ed., Vol 8), pp 399-400.

² *The Gospel according to St Matthew*, VII: 7.

³ *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cen Ed., Vol 14), p 82

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Letters on Yoga* (Cen Ed., Vol 23), p 576.

⁶ *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Cen. Ed., Vol. 21), p 743.

⁷ *The Gospel according to St Matthew*, XVII: 17

anything about God, so how can I love him?" The Sadhu asked, "Well, then, whom do you love really?" The man replied, "Sir, I am an orphan, I have no one to love except a lamb for whom I have deep affection." "Very well," said the Sadhu, "Love the lamb with all your heart but remember that God dwells in it also." The man accepted this advice with full faith and following the Sadhu's instruction tended the lamb with great care and love. Then after a long time he again met the Sadhu accidentally. The Sadhu inquired, "Have you made any spiritual progress by following my advice?" The man replied, "Sir, I am deeply grateful to you for your instruction because by following it I can see the beautiful Divine Presence in the lamb from time to time which gives me great joy." The Sadhu was very pleased with the man's simple but sincere faith and blessed him and then went away.

This man's faith can be said to be "blind" and yet by following it wholeheartedly he eventually had the glimpse of God who dwells in all creatures. History abounds with many such examples. Did not Hanuman, keeping absolute faith in Rama, cross the sea with one gigantic leap without the need of a bridge? Sri Ramakrishna also says, "Once a person has faith he has achieved everything. There is nothing greater than faith."¹

It is easy to keep faith when things go well and the path is smooth. But the trial of one's faith comes when obstacles mount up and the darkness becomes thick and prevails for long periods. It is at such times that the need of sustaining one's faith unfalteringly becomes of paramount importance, for if one loses one's faith in these difficult periods one is bound to fall from the path. It is for this reason that the Mother says, "Faith is the surest guide in the darkest days."² Tagore affirms the same truth in a beautiful image when he says, "Faith is the bird that sings of the Dawn when it is still dark." In yoga the bird is the symbol of the psychic being which remains unwaveringly turned towards the Light even in the midst of all-engulfing darkness.

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Along with sincerity and faith, surrender also is indispensable for success in sadhana. In Sri Aurobindo's words, "Surrender is giving oneself to the Divine—to give everything one is or has to the Divine and regard nothing as one's own, to obey only the Divine Will and no other, to live for the Divine and not for the ego."³

A complete surrender is not possible from the beginning of sadhana because the mind, the vital and the physical parts have their resistances and reservations which persist for a long time. As Sri Aurobindo remarks, "It is only the psychic that knows how to surrender and the psychic is usually very much veiled in the beginning."⁴ So until the psychic comes fully forward and makes a complete

¹ *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 12

² *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cen. Ed., Vol. 14), p. 83.

³ *Letters on Yoga* (Cen. Ed., Vol. 23), p. 585.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 588

surrender of the whole being, the personal effort of the sadhak is very necessary, otherwise he is bound to sink into inertia and may even yield to wrong movements under the pretext of surrender.

Ramakrishna speaks of two methods of surrender—the baby-cat method and the baby-monkey method. In the former one hands over the entire responsibility of one's sadhana to the Divine and makes no effort, while in the latter surrender is accompanied by personal effort. But Sri Aurobindo warns that all cannot follow the baby-cat attitude at once, for it is extremely difficult and it takes time to arrive at it. So personal effort is necessary until one is able to achieve complete surrender.

Speaking about surrender in a letter to a disciple, Sri Aurobindo says, "It is in fact the principle that I myself followed and it is the central process of yoga as I envisage it."¹ Here I am tempted to mention one of the best examples of Sri Aurobindo's own absolute surrender to the Divine to which he has referred in some of his talks and letters. He says that at Baroda, after meditating for three days with Lele, whom he had then taken as his Guru, his mind attained Nirvanic silence and became completely vacant of all thoughts. In that condition, when everything seemed unreal to him, he had to go first to Poona and then to Bombay. In that state of mind he asked Lele, "I have been asked to deliver a lecture. How am I going to speak? Not a single thought is coming to me." Lele told him to make *namaskāra* to Narayana in the audience and wait and speech would come to him from some other source than the mind. He did as he was told to do and found that the whole speech came down from above from beginning to end. On his way back from Bombay to Calcutta also all the speeches he made were from that condition of silence.² What a marvellous example of absolute self-surrender!

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Sincerity, faith and surrender together are thus the fundamental conditions or the triple secret of sadhana. I will conclude my speech by reading a passage from Sri Aurobindo's small book *The Mother* in which he has stressed their essential importances:

"The more complete your faith, sincerity and surrender, the more will grace and protection be with you. And when the grace and protection of the Divine Mother are with you, what is there that can touch you or whom need you fear? A little of it even will carry you through all difficulties, obstacles and dangers; surrounded by its full presence you can go securely on your way because it is hers, careless of all menace, unaffected by any hostility however powerful, whether from this world or from worlds invisible. Its touch can turn difficulties into opportunities, failure into success and weakness into unflinching strength. For the Grace of the Divine Mother is the sanction of the Supreme and now or tomorrow its effect is sure, a thing decreed, inevitable and irresistible."³

¹ *Ibid*, p 587

² See *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Nirodbaran, *Mother India*, May 1986, pp 269-70

³ *The Mother* (Cen Ed, Vol 25), p 10

THE THREE-STAGE ASCENSION OF MAN'S MULTIPLE BEING

(Continued from the issue of September 1986)

NEO-CLASSICISM AND REALISM: THE RATIONAL STAGE IN ART

We have already looked into the infrarational stage in art, with the example of modern art. We now come to the rational stage in evolution. We will illustrate this stage through two periods: the Neo-classical period of the mid-eighteenth century, and the period of Realism which flourished in the nineteenth century, at a time when science was trying to make its influence felt on all human activities. Both periods began by enlightening the preceding one where reason had largely been banished from art, but both carried the cult of reason to its extreme. Neo-classicism became conservative and artificial, where form, though greatly perfected, did not carry the intensity of vision. The Realist movement made art a follower or partner of science: its aim was to portray what it saw, as precisely, correctly and faithfully as possible, using the faculties of reason and observation. Therefore both movements could not survive very long: Neo-classicism gave way to Romanticism, and Realism was soon overtaken by Impressionism and, later, all the other movements of modern art.

Neo-classical art flourished from about 1780 until the middle of the nineteenth century. It was largely inspired by the archaeological excavations of that time, when ancient Greek and Roman sculptures and monuments were discovered, but it was also a movement in revolt against the preceding Baroque and Rococo styles. The exuberance and "fury" of the Baroque must be avoided, it was argued, because they led to "barbarous" and "wicked" works. In his book *A Social History of Art*, Arnold Hauser writes that when the new classical trend emerged, art had surrendered itself to the voluptuousness that dominated the eighteenth century and had acquired a pictorial technique that was all too fluid and flexible, all too playful with rich and charming colours. The new classical trend brought in the love of the pure, uncomplicated line, of regularity, discipline and harmony; it was, above all, a protest against the insincerity, sophistication and empty brilliance of the Rococo. It is for its work of correcting and enlightening the preceding period that Neo-classicism becomes a necessary phase in the evolution of art.

According to the art critic Pierre Francastel, no art founded on the imitation of models has ever been creative, and Neo-classicism, considered as a doctrine of imitation, is unjustifiable. But it acquires great importance the moment we see it as the first step taken in modern times towards a re-examination of the principles of art and aesthetics. From an aesthetic point of view, our roots are very largely in the eighteenth century.

Reason was the supreme monarch in Neo-classical art. According to a rigid

theoretician of this period, "sublime and serene beauty can only be perceived by theory and approached by reason." All exuberance of emotions or gestures was avoided. So, for example, in Bacchanalian scenes the gaiety is held in check, never bursting into exuberance. In a tragic scene, Andromache does not shed a tear as she mourns the death of Hector.

The greatest of the Neo-classicists was Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825) who first became well-known with his masterpiece *The Oath of the Horatii*. He greatly influenced artists during the Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire. The artistic means David employed were strictly rational, methodical and puritanical. Precision, objectivity and restriction were the important elements that went into his painting. But gradually, during the time of Napoleon, the classical trend became conventional and rigid. The naturalness that was once apparent in spite of the fixed rules of technique started to die out, even in the master-painter David. According to Arnold Hauser, the classical world ceased to be a source of inspiration for David and his contemporaries, and became instead a mere convention. David could still produce masterpieces of technique, but when he sought for inspiration he found none.

Soon after the French Revolution, David's disciple Ingres took over as leader of the Neo-classicists. During this period, Classicism began to be threatened by tendencies towards Romanticism, and the classicists continued to become increasingly conservative. Naturalness gave way to rigid conventional norms. Puritanical simplicity and economy were imposed, and "healthy logic" turned into a "cool intellectualism." Thus the movement that had started out as a renovator of lost artistic values, ended up by being a rigid set of rules and standards to be followed by one and all.

Following Neo-classicism and Romanticism, we have a third movement known as Realism. This movement spread to many fields, including art and literature. It came to France during the second Empire, which was "an age of rationalism, reflection and analysis; . . . in all genres the critical intellect was predominant." It was at this time that "science took upon itself the responsibility for the whole future of humanity and led art into accepting its technique of objective observation." Imagination and style gave way to *rational painting*. Objectivity was its main aim, and it tried to be free of all influence or distortion due to the "personal factor" as it was disdainfully called. Hence it gave first place to the faculty of observation.

So strong was the insistence on objectivity that Courbet, the champion of Realistic art and its most well-known representative, wanted to destroy even the word "imagination." He said, "The imagination in art consists in being able to find the most complete expression for an *existing thing*, but never consists in creating the thing itself." Art became quasi-photographic; it stood a companion to science, following in her cult of reason. The creative urge was totally stifled. What classicism had done with the aid of the past, Realism did with the help of science. According to the French poet Baudelaire, Realism must face the same

dangers as Neo-classicism, for both deny the powers of imagination and creation or, in other words, the subjective approach. In his *Curiosités Esthétiques* he attacks Ingres on one side and Courbet on the other. Both "are so narrow in their outlook that their faculties become atrophied. The difference is that Monsieur Ingres makes a heroic sacrifice in honour of tradition . . . Whereas Monsieur Courbet makes his sacrifice to nature, as it appears here and now." The Mother also speaks critically of the Realistic movement: "It must be said that the art of the end of the last century, the art of the Second Empire, was bad . . . the artists made portraits which indeed turned into photography They were flat, cold, without soul and without vision."

Thus, we find in both the movements of Neo-classicism and Realism an over-stressing of the importance of reason and the critical mind in art. Though reason must enlighten and guide the crude infrarational impulses and instincts, it must not impose upon the creative soul its rules and norms, its fixed standards of aesthetics. The critical mind, though important as an agent of correction, must not become the law-giver and subdue the spontaneity and intensity of vision by cold analysis and objectivity. Though technique has a place in art, it is not its sole consideration. So, in the evolution of art we find certain periods in which the artist transcends the mind and steps into the domain of the suprarational. Here reason is not rejected, but is given the place of a helper and not a master.

(To be continued)

ANURUPA NAIK
(Higher Course, 3rd year)

THE EPIC OF THE UNIVERSE

1. A Mystery's Process

A Mystery's process is the universe.
At first was laid a strange anomalous base,
A void, a cipher of some secret Whole,
Where zero held infinity in its sum
And all and Nothing were a single term,
An eternal negative, a matrix Nought
Into its forms the Child is ever born
Who lives forever in the vasts of God.
A slow reversal's movement then took place:
A gas belched out from some invisible Fire,
Of its dense rings were formed these million stars;
Upon earth's new-born soil God's tread was heard.

Savitri, Centenary Edition, pp. 100-01.

Sri Aurobindo describes here, using the language of the poet, the mystical vision of the processes of the Universe. The purpose of the earth's birth is to provide a soil for the tread of God. But we cannot hear that silent tread. However, we do receive sounds and signals from objects near about us and from objects lying far beyond the edge of our sight. It is with these bits of information that we construct our own understanding of this vast material world enveloping us. What we understand and describe then becomes the Epic of the Universe, created in the language of science. We first propose to study this Epic in its various scientific details, but we will come back to the "Mystery's process" for the unravelling of the hidden mysteries that science may not be able to see or describe.

2. The World of the Ancients

Who were the first people to observe the heavens? What was the concept of the Universe to the ancients? By what methods did they verify their ideas?

People not only looked and wondered at the sky but also watched it carefully. They observed the moon and began to figure time by moon-months.

Because people found this knowledge useful, they continued watching the sky. They observed the sun as it rose and set every day. From its movement they learned how to tell the time of the day and learned when to plant and harvest their crops. Later, the sky-watchers discovered that at different seasons certain stars disappeared from the sky. People began to observe other things also: for example, the Egyptians noted that by looking at the sky they could predict when their river Nile would rise.

The people of China, India, Sumer, the Mayas of Yucatan and Guatemala

were also careful observers of the heavenly bodies and had very accurate calendars.

Though people learned a great deal about the rising and setting of the sun, the moon, and the stars, and even of the planets, they thought that all heavenly bodies were small objects moving around the Earth. They believed that the Earth was the centre of the Universe that looked like a great dome of sky hung overhead.

Night after night they saw this dome, with twinkling stars and bright planets, turn from east to west, following the movement of the sun by day. Because they thought that the Earth did not move, as there was no way of seeing or knowing its motion, they supposed that the heavens turned about the Earth.

By the 6th century B.C. the Babylonians had learned much about astronomy. They knew when eclipses of the sun and moon would occur, when the changes of season would come, and when it would be time to plant or harvest crops. As they were successful in such predictions, they thought that they could foretell all kinds of events of their daily life too. The knowledge of astronomy gained by the Babylonians later went from Egypt to Greece.

The Greeks started the true science of astronomy. Pythagoras (6th century B.C.) seems to have been the first to suggest that the Earth is a globe. He thought, however, that the Earth was the centre of the Universe and that it did not move. Hipparchus, in the 2nd century B.C., made the first catalogue of stars.

In the 2nd century A.D. Ptolemy, by using a number of circles moving one into another, tried to show how the "planets", including the sun and the moon, moved around the Earth. His book, the *Almagest*, was accepted for 1400 years as an indisputable authority on astronomy.

3. The Beginning of Modern Astronomy

With Nicholas Copernicus (1473-1543), modern astronomy had its true beginning. In his book *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Bodies* he presented his ideas of the Universe with the sun located at its centre. He explained the motion of the planets—including the Earth—by supposing that they revolved around the sun which was stationary. But to account for the periodic alternations of night and day he had to assume that the Earth rotated on its axis.

In 1609 Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) made his own telescope and explored the skies with it. The discovery of the telescope was a great event for observational astronomy.

During the same period Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), a German astronomer, laid the foundation of theoretical astronomy. From the data of Tycho de Brahe he concluded that the planets do not travel in circular orbits, as had been assumed so far, but trace elliptical paths. The work of Galileo and Kepler helped Newton (1642-1727) in formulating the Laws of Motion and the Universal Law of Gravitation.

After Newton's time astronomy advanced more and more rapidly, both in the observational and in the theoretical fields. Observatories all over the world

began to be established and modern instruments invented to observe the Universe.

4. Recent Developments

Let us now try to have a more modern perspective of the Universe in a quick way. Some of the primary questions that the astronomers are presently concerned with are: Has the Universe a finite size? Is the structure of the Universe constant? How did the Universe evolve? What will be its fate? And many related questions.

Newton had explained the laws of planetary motion by introducing the concept of the gravitational field. This forced him to assume that the Universe must be flat and infinite in extension. It should not appear different when seen in different directions. In other words, his Universe was infinite and isotropic in nature.

On the other hand, Einstein held that the Universe was static and limited in extent. He also proposed that space was curved; it was the total mass of the Universe that was responsible for this curvature.

In 1925 Hubble pointed out that there are many other galaxies in the Universe apart from the Milky Way galaxy in which our solar system is placed. From the study of light coming from these galaxies he came to the conclusion that they are flying away from each other. He also noticed that the farther out they are, the faster they fly away from us.

But how does one know this receding of the galaxies? For this purpose one uses what is called the Doppler effect. Consider a train approaching a railway station. The pitch of its whistle is heard to be higher than when it is stationary. Similarly, when the train is leaving the station and receding, the pitch gets lowered. From the nature of the change in its pitch one can know whether the train is approaching or leaving the station. In the same manner, if the star is moving towards the observer, its light will be shifted towards the blue end of the spectrum; but if it is moving away then the shift will be towards the red end. The Doppler shifts of light coming from galaxies show that the galaxies are receding and that the Universe is in a state of expansion.

Modern theories of the Universe are based on this flight of galaxies. Abbé Lemaitre explained this process of expansion by means of what is known as the Big Bang Theory. He argued that, billions of years ago, the cosmic matter was in an extremely compressed state, from which expansion started by a primordial explosion.

According to another theory, known as the Steady State Theory, the galaxies recede from one another but their spatial densities remain constant.

The third important theory is the "Pulsating Universe" according to which the Universe expands and contracts alternately between periods running into tens of billions of years.

Which of the above is really happening? Will the expansion continue forever or will it stop, to be followed by an "implosion?"

In order to choose between the open and infinite, or closed and finite Universe or any possibility, we have to depend entirely upon the observation and analysis of various types of signals we constantly receive from all around us.

The observational aspect of astronomy has made great strides recently. Apart from optical telescopes, we have today the infra-red (IR) telescope, the X-ray, the radio telescope, and also methods of obtaining and deciphering information from ultra-violet and gamma rays.

There are two main types of optical telescopes—the refracting and the reflecting telescopes. The refractor uses a lens and the reflector a mirror to gather light. In a refractive telescope the observer looks directly at the object, but in a reflecting telescope he looks at its reflection in a mirror. The biggest optical telescopes today are reflecting telescopes (mirror diameter: 200" — at Mt. Palomar, the U.S.A.; 230" in the USSR; 90" at Kavalur, India).

The radio telescope consists of a large reflector fitted with an antenna. The reflector collects and focuses radio waves on the antenna and records them. The result is analysed in a computer and studied.

X-ray astronomy, mainly used in the study of inter-galactic gases, depends totally on satellite-based instruments.

Gamma-ray astronomy deals with high-energy electromagnetic radiation received from outer space. Gamma-rays react with cosmic rays, interstellar matter, and low-energy photons. There are wide-ranging reactions, the understanding of which will provide a clearer view of the cosmos.

Infra-red astronomy enables us to observe objects at temperatures between 10° and $20,000^{\circ}$ K. The IR telescope is quite similar to the optical telescope, and often optical telescopes are used as IR telescopes by the addition of appropriate devices.

Apart from these instruments of direct observation, there are sophisticated spectroscopes and other types of detectors. The mass of data obtained in this way has to be computer-analysed. We shall now be chiefly concerned with these data and their interpretations in formulating our ideas of the cosmos.

(To be continued)

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(Higher Course, 3rd year)