

# MOTHER INDIA

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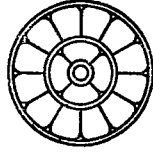
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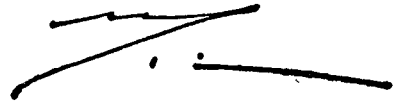


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail.”

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## A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON JUNE 15, 1955

Mother reads from *Lights on Yoga*, "The Goal".

*Sweet Mother, what is "dynamic realisation"?*

It is the realisation which is expressed in action. There is a realisation in inaction like that of those who enter into contemplations from which they don't come out, and who don't move; and then there is a dynamic realisation which transforms all your action, all your movements, all your way of being, your character. In the first case one's outer being remains the same, nothing changes, and usually it destroys all possibility of action, one can no longer do anything, one remains seated... In the second case, it changes everything, your character, your way of being, your way of acting, all your actions and even your surroundings, and finally all your existence, your total being: this is dynamic realisation, with the transformation of the body as its culmination.

Some people try to transform their body before even having transformed their intelligence, and this produces a complete displacement, it unbalances them totally. One must first transform his thought, all his mind, all his mental activity, organise it with higher knowledge; and at the same time one must transform his character, all the movements of the vital, all impulses, all reactions. And finally, when these two things are done, in any case up to a certain point, one can begin to think of transforming the cells of his body, but not begin at the end; one must begin at the beginning.

One can do... Sri Aurobindo says, doesn't he, that one can do everything at the same time, but the centre, the most important part, must first be transformed sufficiently before one can think of transforming his body... like some people who, for example, immediately want to change their food or even to stop eating, because, they say, finally when the Supermind comes one will no longer need to eat. So before the Supermind has come they want to begin by what will happen; they stop eating, stop sleeping, and the result is that they fall very ill.

It is preferable at first to begin by receiving the Supermind in one's mind with a sufficient knowledge, and gradually come to transforming all the rest.

*Sweet Mother, what is "the dynamic side"?*

It is the same thing. It is this side of the Yoga.

There are two aspects: an aspect which is static and a preparation, and a dynamic aspect which is an aspect of transformation, of action. Dynamic means energetic; it means propulsion, action.

*What does "the negative side" and "the positive side of experience" mean?*

Ah, my child, you have certain faults, you know, things which prevent you from progressing. So, the negative side is to try and get rid of your defects. There are things which you have to be, to become, qualities which you must build in yourself in order to realise; so this side of construction is the positive side.

You have a defect, for example, a tendency not to speak the truth. Now this habit of falsehood, of not seeing or not speaking the truth, you fight against it by rejecting falsehood from your consciousness and endeavouring to eliminate that habit of not speaking the truth. For the thing to be done, you must build in yourself the habit of speaking only the truth. For the thing to be done, you must build in yourself the habit of perceiving and always telling the truth. One is negative: you reject a fault. The other is positive: you build the quality. It is like that.

For everything it is like that. For example, you have somewhere in your being that kind of habit of revolt, ignorant, arrogant, obscure revolt, of refusing what comes from above. So, the negative side is to fight against this, to prevent it from expressing itself and reject it from your nature; and on the other side you must build positively surrender, understanding, consecration, self-giving and the sense of a complete collaboration with the divine forces. This is the positive side. Do you understand?

The same thing again: people who get angry... the habit of flying into a rage, of getting angry... one fights against that, refuses to get angry, rejects these vibrations of anger from one's being but this must be replaced by an imperturbable calm, a perfect tolerance, an understanding of the point of view of others, a clear and tranquil vision, a calm decision—which is the positive side.

*What is "the image of the dry coconut fruit"?*

It is said that when one has realised (it is in here that he says it), one becomes like the dry coconut which moves in the shell, which is free inside, no longer attached to the envelope and moving freely within. That's what I have heard, it is the image for there being no attachment any more. You have seen this, when a coconut becomes completely dry, the nut inside is no longer fixed to the shell; and so when you move it, it moves inside; it is completely free, it is absolutely independent of the shell. So the image of the being is given: the ordinary physical consciousness is the shell; and so long as the Atman is not completely formed it is attached, it holds on, it is stuck to the shell, and it cannot be detached; but when it is completely formed it is absolutely free inside, it rolls freely in the shell without being fixed to it. It must be this image.

*Sweet Mother, what does this mean: "...one must transfer all the allegiance of the Purusha from the lower Prakriti..."*

You don't know what this means?

In the ordinary case, of the ordinary being and ordinary life, the Purusha is subjected to Prakriti, to the external Nature, he is her slave. So Sri Aurobindo says that it is not enough to free oneself from this slavery. He begins that way: it is not enough to free oneself from the slavery; he must keep his allegiance, but instead of obeying Prakriti, he must obey the Divine Mother; that is, instead of obeying something which is lower than himself, he must obey what is higher. That is the sentence: transfer his allegiance from this to that.

Do you understand? No? Ah, it is probably someone who wrote to him saying that he wanted his Purusha to be completely free from allegiance to Prakriti. So he answered: No, that's not enough; if you free it, it is only half the work; your allegiance must be there, but instead of being related to Prakriti, it must exist for the Divine Mother. And then later he explains the difference. There is an entire passage there in which he says that the Divine Mother should not be identified with Prakriti. Naturally there is something of the Divine Mother there, because something of the Divine Mother is behind everything. But one must not think that Prakriti is the Divine Mother.

(Nolini) *It is the negative and positive side—as Tara asked—of allegiance to Prakriti.*

Allegiance to Prakriti, yes, it's true. To get rid of this allegiance to Prakriti is the negative side of the development; one frees himself from his allegiance to Prakriti, but one must take a step further and have the positive side of being surrendered to the Divine Mother.

*The last sentence: "...in the Truth-Creation the law is that of a constant unfolding without any Pralaya." What is this constant unfolding?*

The Truth-Creation... it is the last line? (*Mother consults the book*) I think we have already spoken about this several times. It has been said that in the process of creation, there is the movement of creation followed by a movement of preservation and ending in a movement of disintegration or destruction; and even it has been repeated very often: "All that begins must end", etc., etc.

In fact in the history of our universe there have been six consecutive periods which began by a creation, were prolonged by a force of preservation and ended by a disintegration, a destruction, a return to the Origin, which is called Pralaya; and that is why this tradition is there. But it has been said that the seventh creation would be a progressive creation, that is, after the starting-point of the creation, instead of its being simply followed by a preservation, it would be followed by a progressive manifestation which would express the Divine more and more completely, so that no disintegration and return to the Origin would be necessary. And it has been an-

nounced that the period we are in is precisely the seventh, that is, it would not end by a Pralaya, a return to the Origin, a destruction, a disappearance, but that it would be replaced by a constant progress, because it would be a more and more perfect unfolding of the divine Origin in its creation.

And this is what Sri Aurobindo says. He speaks of a constant unfolding, that is, the Divine manifests more and more completely, more and more perfectly, in a progressive creation. It is the nature of this progression which makes the return to the Origin, the destruction no longer necessary. All that does not progress disappears, and that is why physical bodies die, it's because they are not progressive; they are progressive up to a certain moment, then there they stop and most often they remain stable for a certain time, and then they begin to decline, and then disappear. It's because the physical body, physical matter as it is at present, is not plastic enough to be able to progress constantly. But it is not impossible to make it sufficiently plastic for the perfecting of the physical body to be such that it no longer needs disintegration, that is, death.

Only, this cannot be realised except by the descent of the Supermind which is a force higher than all those which have so far manifested and which will give the body a plasticity that will allow it to progress constantly, that is, to follow the divine movement in its unfolding.

*Sweet Mother, I am mixing up things. Here it is written: "But one who has not mastered and lived the truths of Overmind cannot reach the supramental Truth."*

Yes.

*It is here that I am getting mixed up. Often you have said that the reign of Overmind is finished and that of the Supermind is to come, and that one doesn't need to go through the same experiences of the Overmind, because that's already done.*

What is he saying, Pavitra, do you understand what he is saying?

*(Pavitra) Mother, you have said several times that the reign of the Overmind is finished and now it is the reign of the Supermind.*

Yes, in a way, yes.

*Therefore it is not necessary to pass through the experiences of the Overmind to reach the Supermind.*

I have said that there was no need to pass through the experiences of the Overmind in order to have the supramental experiences? Have I ever said such a thing?

*I don't say that you have said that, but perhaps I have understood it like that.*

Ah, well! In any case I don't think so. I don't know if I have said it, but I don't think so, because we are in a transitional period. It is absolutely certain that, in a general way, it is still the Overmind which is ruling and that if the Supermind comes, it's that it is only beginning to come and to have an influence, and that, in a period of transition, what Sri Aurobindo says here is absolutely obvious: If you understand nothing of the Overmind you will understand still less of the Supermind, and he has repeated, I don't know how often, that one must not try to leap to the highest summit without having climbed all the steps. Once again... when did I read... it's not so long ago... that it was necessary to climb all the steps to go to the top? You can't take a leap and neglect all the rest. It is not possible. You can do it quickly. What can happen is that what took several lifetimes can be done in a few years or even perhaps in a few months; but you have to do it.

When we all have supramental bodies and when within ourselves we are in the supramental consciousness, we shall perhaps be able to manufacture little supramental beings who will not need to pass through these experiences! But it is only "when", it is not so at present. (*Laughter*)

One must not hope for things before they are done. They will be done, but a little later.

*(Questions and Answers 1955, pp. 204-210)*



## TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of May 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. Mamilal, 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 13, 1940

M: Sir, was the Mother doing your Yoga in Europe?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why my Yoga? She was doing Yoga though the Europeans don't call it Yoga.

N: There is such a striking similarity between your ideas and the Mother's.

M: Yes, that is why I ask.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yoga is everywhere the same.

N: Yes, but what I mean is that the Mother also stressed the need of divine manifestation, not considering the world as maya. Did she have any teacher?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, except Jnan Chakravarty, husband of Krishnaprem's Guru. He gave her initiation in the Gita's Yoga in Paris. And she used to come in contact with Abdul Baha in Paris. As a matter of fact, it was she who was leading and organising the Bahai Group in Europe. In one of their group meditations Mother had some experience which none of the others had.

M: What is Bahaism, Sir? I find it mentioned in the *Sunday Times* too.

SRI AUROBINDO: I think Abdul Baha was the son or grandson of Baha-ullah who established the Bahai sect. It is a modernised and liberalised form of Mahomedanism. They believe there is truth in every religion, and they believe themselves to have gathered all the essential religious truths. This Baha-ullah was imprisoned in Turkey for 30-40 years. He was kept in a tower; about 30-40 thousand people used to come to see him and he used to give them his blessings standing at the tower-window.

N: I heard that Mother used to see you in visions but could not make out the exact identity. She thought it might be a Chinese figure.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, not like that. Every day somebody used to appear to her calling himself Krishna. As soon as she saw me, she recognised that it was myself.

*Evening*

M: Could Hitler be called as great as Napoleon, Sir?

SRI AUROBINDO: What? How can he be compared with Napoleon? He can't stand any comparison with Napoleon. Hitler is a man of one idea, he has no other capacity or activity except that he is also a house-painter, while Napoleon had many sides: he was not only a military general, but also an administrator, organiser, legislator and many other things. It was he who organised France and Europe, stabilised the French revolution. Besides being a legislator he established the bases of social laws, administration, finance which are followed even today. He is not only the greatest military genius in history but one of the greatest men with manifold capacities. And Hitler is a man of one idea, with no intellect, which he applies with strong force and violence, no control over his emotions, hesitating in his policies which they call caution. And all his power comes from the Asura by whom he is possessed and guided while Napoleon is a normal human being acting through the power of his brain which reached the highest development possible in a human being.

M: Napoleon is said to have been immoral.

SRI AUROBINDO: If you mean that he was not chaste, it is true. As I said he was a normal human being with enormous many-sided power and capacities which very few people have possessed.

Hitler's idea of the Nazi order is also not his. It is of a Jew whom he had murdered later on.

P: And a specimen of the new order and civilisation he wants to establish you can see in Europe.

N: But as regards military genius they say he is as great as Napoleon.

SRI AUROBINDO: How? One can say that he has developed a new technique which he has pursued with great audacity. Even that new technique is not his. It was discovered by a Frenchman and was passed on to the German Generals. They hesitated to act on it while Hitler pursued it boldly, disregarding the advice of the Generals.

Hitler is a new type, an infra-rational mystic—representing the dark counter-part of what we are striving to arrive at: a supra-rational mysticism. (*Looking at M*) Do you know that in his secluded place he has a cinema and enjoys and gloats over the horrors and sufferings he has inflicted over the people? That is the story given by his maid servant who was with him serving him all the time.

December 16, 1940

(*Anilbaran in some article on the Gita has tried to bring into it transformation, the Life Divine, etc.*)

SRI AUROBINDO: The Gita doesn't speak of transformation. It is his own reading of the Gita—one can say that it shows the way to something further or to our Yoga. What it says is to act from a spiritual consciousness through the instru-

ments of the human mind, vital, etc., not by the transformation of these instruments.

P: Anilbaran admits this but he says that here and there in the Gita are hints beyond it.

SRI AUROBINDO: In that case my claim that our Yoga is new doesn't hold good, and the man who said that the Gita speaks of transformation etc. would be right.

*(P conveyed Sri Aurobindo's views to Anilbaran, and Anilbaran admitted his mistake and said that in the future he would be cautious and accurate in his statements.)*

December 17, 1940

*(Next day Anilbaran again asked through P: "What is the limit of transformation the Gita speaks of?")*

SRI AUROBINDO: Limit of transformation? But the Gita, as I said, doesn't speak of transformation. It goes as far as the Buddhi.

P: He says *pūtā madbhāvam āgatāh*—"they come to my nature"—doesn't this mean transformation of nature?

SRI AUROBINDO: That is not transformation—*pūtā*, being purified you attain to my nature—*i.e.* the Divine nature—but such attainment is not transformation.

P: When one is acting from the Divine nature, the *Divine* spiritual Consciousness is the background. Is it not transformed nature?

SRI AUROBINDO: What is Divine nature? Transformation is not change of ordinary nature into it. At least that is not the sense in which I have used the term.

P: The Vaishnavas speak of getting the nature of the Divine.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then is that transformation? If so, Vaishnavas have the supramental transformation of nature! And any change of nature can be so called. In that case, attaining Sattwic nature is also that.

N: Most of us don't quite understand what is meant by this transformation.

SRI AUROBINDO: When there is an entire change in the basis of one's consciousness and a radical change in the dynamic movement of nature, *i.e.* one is no longer acting from the ordinary or even enlightened human consciousness and its ignorance—

N: Couldn't people like Ramakrishna who have attained to Divine Consciousness, and been living and acting from it, be said to have transformed nature? He didn't act from a human motive or egoism or selfishness.

SRI AUROBINDO: Was he correct in all his actions? Did he not commit any mistakes? At least he didn't claim such a state. He didn't have selfishness in the ordinary human sense of the term, but was he completely free from the separative I? He himself said that the shadow or form of the I is necessary for action. In the supramental transformation the ego is not indispensable for action.

People always make a mistake between change of nature and transformation. If change of nature meant transformation, then many sadhaks here have got transformation.

N: What then is transformation?

SRI AUROBINDO: Transformation is that in which everything is based on the Truth-Consciousness, the whole instrumentality is that. One lives in that and acts from that, one has it both in its static and dynamic aspects. It is said that Ramakrishna had a cold while travelling in a train. Somebody asked him to put out his head through the window and his cold would be cured. He did that.

N: He was quite childlike in many such matters.

SRI AUROBINDO: But was it acting from the Divine Consciousness?

M: What about Buddha, Sir? Was he not transformed?

SRI AUROBINDO: He had knowledge. Knowledge is not transformation. People are using the word in any sense just like the word supramental. It is I who have first used it and in the special sense I have given to it. If everybody has attained to the transformation I speak of, the supramental transformation has already been there and everybody is supramental. They don't make the distinction between acting from a Spiritual Consciousness which is above mind but acts through human instruments, and the Supramental action from the Truth-Consciousness.

M: There may be sadhaks here who act from the Spiritual Consciousness.

SRI AUROBINDO: Who? Nirod? (*Laughter*)

M: Yes, Nirod and Anilbaran etc. (*Laughter*)

P: What Ramakrishna and others did was at most from the intuitive consciousness. They were open to that plane and got inspiration for action from those levels.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, their static consciousness may have been transformed but it is the dynamic nature too that has to undergo transformation.

P: That is why they called this world Ignorance. It is Sri Aurobindo alone who said that Ignorance is growing knowledge.

SRI AUROBINDO: If they had believed and known about transformation, they wouldn't have condemned the world as *maya*.

People get shocked when they hear that something more has to be achieved.

P: Yes, they think Ramakrishna and everybody else had all the knowledge and realisation. What more can there be?

M: But you have got transformation even down to the Inconscience, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: Have I? I am glad to hear of it.

M: If you haven't, how can you write or know about it?

SRI AUROBINDO: One can't have the knowledge without getting a thing? If you mean whether I have the experience of the Inconscience, I say I have and so I can write from my experience about it.

N (*to M*): You have an idea of peace, you know about it but you haven't got it yet.

M: As I see the sea, have an idea of it and know about it without plunging into it?

SRI AUROBINDO: Even seeing it, you may not know it is the sea. As some people

from Punjab saw the sea and asked, "What is that blue thing?" (*Laughter*)

*Evening*

M: How shall we be able to say that one's nature has been transformed?

SRI AUROBINDO: By being transformed yourself! (*Laughter*)

M: Could Buddha be said to have a transformed nature? His actions and discourses don't seem to have been inspired from the human mind.

SRI AUROBINDO: He used human reason and logic in his discourses.

(*At about this moment N arrived.*)

M: Here is Nirod. He won't agree that Buddha didn't have a transformed nature, being a Buddhist himself. He will take the side of Buddha.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well?

N: I didn't say that Buddha was transformed. But as for applying human reason and logic, you also do the same with us.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is because I have to speak to the human mind, so I have to apply human logic.

M: By what tests or actions could one judge that one's nature is transformed? Is there no such criterion?

SRI AUROBINDO: You are asking like Arjuna in the Gita—How does a liberated man walk or speak? As I said, you have to be transformed yourself to know that. (*Laughter*)

M (*laughing*): That is what I too said to Nirod. That shows I have become transformed.

SRI AUROBINDO: That doesn't show that....

M: Are we a help or hindrance, Sir, in your work? (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO (*smiling*): You are asking a delicate personal question. You may be either or both. Or your help may be a hindrance and hindrance a help. (*Laughter*) You have to be transformed in order to realise that.

(*To be continued*)

NIRODBARAN

## NOTE

Apropos of Sri Aurobindo's mention of his "experience of the Inconscience", we may quote a sonnet of his dating to the same period, in general, as the Talks:

### THE INCONSCIENT FOUNDATION

My mind beholds its veiled subconscious base,  
 All the dead obstinate symbols of the past,  
 The hereditary moulds, the stamps of race  
 Are upheld to sight, the old imprints effaced.

In a downpour of supernal light it reads  
 The black inconscient's enigmatic script—  
 Recorded in a hundred shadowy screeds  
 An inert world's obscure enormous drift;

All flames, is torn and burned and cast away.  
 There slept the tables of the Ignorance,  
 There the dumb dragon edicts of her sway,  
 The scriptures of Necessity and Chance.

Pure is the huge foundation left and nude,  
 A boundless mirror of Gods' infinitude.

---

18.10.1939, -7.2.1940

## BULA-DA

BULA-DA, who expired in the early hours of April 28, was one of the oldest sadhaks. He joined the Ashram in 1934, soon after his stepmother and stepbrother had settled there. He never went out of Pondicherry. He came from a respectable family. His father was a barrister practising in Burma and his stepmother was a niece of the famous Nationalist leader C. R. Das. His early education was at Shantiniketan under Tagore's influence.

As soon as he arrived here, the Mother gave him the work of the Electricity and Water-supply Department under Pavitra's supervision. It was his tireless effort, organising power and efficient service that turned it into one of the most thorough and sound units of the Ashram. The Mother had entire trust in him.

Pondicherry electricity was very unstable in the early days. The current would go off at any time, due to which the Mother and Sri Aurobindo had to undergo a good deal of inconvenience, especially in their almost night-long labour of answering the letters of the sadhaks. Bula-da took the initiative to instal generators in the Ashram and we know today what a relief they are.

Service was Bula-da's motto. He gave up all kinds of diversions, would not even leave the Ashram compound during his off-time lest electricity should fail and the Mother be in trouble. He was also always ready to see to the comforts of the Ashram inmates. He had a simple childlike nature and always tried to help others turn towards the Divine. His devotion to his stepmother who was as if his very own mother was exemplary. He passed away shortly after she had done so. Did his soul feel that this life's mission was over? At any rate he won our hearts and earned our regard by his sweetness and selfless love.

NIRODBARAN

# PRADYOT'S QUESTIONS AND THE MOTHER'S ANSWERS

## FIVE TALKS, ONE LETTER AND A REPORT

28.1.1964

P: I am going to Calcutta. There they will ask me one question regarding the present situation—communal riots. What is the solution?

MOTHER: The solution is, of course, the change of consciousness. I know those other people behaved badly, like animals—even animals are better than human beings—but if people in India also do the same, they are playing into the hands of the forces that make people do evil and strengthen the hold of these forces. Retaliation like this is no remedy.

P: People here feel frustrated, they see no remedy, do not know which way to go, whom to look up to. They are going the wrong way, following the wrong lead. Isn't the division of the country responsible for much of these troubles?

MOTHER: Yes, division of religion, of country, of interest. If people felt like brothers, not brothers who quarrel, but conscious of their common origin...

P: When are you coming upon the scene?

MOTHER: Don't be under the illusion that I am not there. I am there, the force, the consciousness are there, but there is no receptivity. During the Chinese trouble, I was in those places at the front, concretely, but I am sorry to say that the only people who were receptive were the Chinese. The impulsion to come forward disappeared. That is receptivity. No one knew why they withdrew. On the Indian side a few were touched and they told me of terrible conditions.

Since World War II, I have been keeping Kali quiet, but she is restless. Times are critical, anything may happen. If people will only give up their ego.

P: I shall suggest a simpler way, to turn to you.

MOTHER: Perhaps the time has come to tell others what I have told you. You may talk if any occasion arises. Keep your faith and go like a warrior.

September 1964

P: The objective of the present conflict with Pakistan is, I suppose, the end of the division.

MOTHER: Yes, of course. It is well understood.

But we have to be wide-visioned, large-hearted, generous. There should be no spirit of revenge. It will not be the rule of the conqueror over the conquered; it will be the reconciliation of fighting brothers.

News comes from the occult—of turmoil. But there is Power behind it. It seems the Lord has taken charge.

P: It seems everybody is against us; for instance, England, America.

MOTHER: Yes, I have written in *Prayers and Meditations* that a day will come when the whole world will rise against the Divine and oppose his work, and the Divine will take the whole world into Her arms.

1965

P: In Bihar, although there has been rain owing to your intervention and green patches are visible, some places are still without any vegetation. There is a general scarcity of drinking water.

MOTHER: Are there still difficulties? The rain was not sufficient?

P: Perhaps not sufficient in those places. But are these difficulties necessary?

MOTHER: No! There are two reasons for them. One is the people's inertia. They need blows to wake them up. The other is more serious; it is a sort of liking, a preference for dramas which invite the blows.

The sadhana is now going on in the cells. All difficulties will disappear but it will take time. I do not have much time to devote to this work, otherwise it could be done quicker.

1966

P: The Government and the people—the country—are facing tremendous difficulties, social, economic, political and spiritual.

What is the solution?

Do we know what is to be done? Are the problems too big for us? Have we the will to do our best? Beyond that, do we know that a prayer from the heart offered in sincerity and faith is answered by the Divine? Do we know that the Divine is with us here to guide us?

If we do, then all problems can be solved.

MOTHER: You have seen something during the drought.<sup>1</sup> I have seen it many times during, for instance, the Chinese invasion when we seemed to be totally unprepared and the Chinese withdrew, also during the Pakistani war last year when we could stand up to much superior armament.

There is no reason to despair, what is necessary is to be receptive.

Receptivity means, to offer

What we have

What we are

What we do

to the Divine.

To the extent we are receptive, to that extent the problems, even the most difficult ones, can be solved.

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the November rains in the drought-affected areas in Bihar and U.P.



26.4.1967

P. I am leaving for Calcutta and I want to know what is the significance of the figures 4-5-67 which are said to symbolically represent the descent or manifestation which will take place on May 4. If I am asked, I should be able to tell people about it.

MOTHER: You came to me this morning—that is, in a dream—and asked me the meaning of 4-5-67. You can tell them:

4. Manifestation
5. Power
6. New Creation
7. Realisation

This will keep them quiet. I am not sure that it did not happen on the 24th April. The meditation on that day was unique in my life. The very cells of the body were totally conscious. After the meditation I should have kept sitting for a few minutes. But I got up instead to reach the table and I nearly fell. Something was happening from New Year's day, very very concrete. 24th April might be a preparation for 4th May.

3.3.1970

P: You have asked us to help you. How can I help you? What am I to do?

MOTHER: To concentrate and open to receive the New Progressive Consciousness, to receive the new things which are coming down.

\*

Once a leader of a political group went on a sham hunger-strike on the pavement opposite the Ashram gate. It continued for several days, and the Mother seems to have instructed people that they need pay no attention to him. One fine morning, he was conspicuous by his absence. What had happened was that the day before this, Pradyot had gone to see the Mother and asked her, "Why don't you stop this comedy?" She had replied, "The Divine alone can do it." Pradyot had retorted, "But are you not the Divine? Why do you confuse me?" She had smiled and said, "But I am telling you what people say." The next day the Divine acted.

## TO A POETIC SEEKER OF THE SPIRIT

### SOME EXTRACTS FROM PERSONAL LETTERS

*(Continued from the issue of May 1986)*

YOUR card for my birthday has reached me. I thank you for remembering the occasion and for the good wishes. "Sweet Delight" is absolutely the most appropriate thing to wish one who would like to count himself a poet. For, the fountain of all rhythmic creation, be it of words or of worlds, is Delight. That is the old Vedantic realisation, as opposed to the Buddhist doctrine that Desire is at the root of all world-play—Desire that is born of attachment to phenomenal existence and therefore a folly the wise man should reject and outgrow. I have heard that Sri Aurobindo and Paul Richard were often at loggerheads on this point. Richard postulated Desire as the world-maker, Sri Aurobindo Delight. And indeed it is when one passes beyond Desire in oneself that one is ready to perceive that Delight is the power which projects the drama of Time from the Dream of Eternity. To put the situation more correctly, the surpassing of Desire leads to a Nirvana which is not single-tracked as Buddha preached but double-vistaed as Sri Aurobindo experienced that vast realisation: one is poised

Either to fade in the Unknowable  
Or thrill with the luminous seas of the Infinite.

"The luminous seas" are those of the Divine Ananda which has no beginning or end. The epithet "luminous" is very apt, for this Ananda is De-light, a rapturous pulsation one with Knowledge, with Truth-Consciousness and reveals the depths of Eternity. That is why the human poet—representative of the Archetypal manifestor of cosmic harmonies—is no mere purveyor of beautiful sounds but an enchanted unveiler of hidden realities. Sri Aurobindo considers his work to be much more than even a god-like pastime: it is a great formative and illuminative power.

Your adjectiving of "Delight" by "Sweet" does not add to the essential meaning, for "Delight" always carries sweetness, but it does serve to emphasise what is implicit and it brings home what the Rigvedic seer-singers signified when they spoke of Ananda as being Amrita, the nectar of immortality, the ambrosia of the infinite and eternal existence, and also called it Madhu, honey. The Divine Delight is not only immense: it is intense too—and that intensity is conveyed by this taste-term "Sweet". Indian aesthetics pinpoints the intensity that is sweetness by speaking of Rasa—"the juice-enjoyment"—as the basic aesthetic experience. I may remark that "Sweet" prefixed to "Delight" suggests in the supreme Ananda the origin of the inmost part of our self, the true Soul of us, the "psychic being", as Sri Aurobindo designates it, the psychic being which is not a phenomenon of the Cosmic Conscious-

ness like the mind and the life-force and the body but hails from the Transcendent that is the ultimate home of the creative Truth-conscious Ananda. The plenary poet, especially in the Aurobindonian sense, bears some touch of the Psyche no less than the contact of the Spirit. Thanks again for your inspired wish on my birthday.

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The Mother's presence is extremely intense today—as it should be to all who have pledged their future to her and to whom 21 February, along with 15 August, is the greatest occasion in history because something beyond history, a Grace of the Eternal, enters the historical stream to give it not only what it could never deserve but also what it could never dream of and desire. For this stream belongs to the cosmic movement which, though it has the transcendent behind it, never has the transcendent directly in itself: its culmination would be the highest stratum of the world of the Gods where the Many stand unified and harmonised in a Godhead synthesising in a single *summum bonum* the diverse goals of the various religions: the culmination would be the glory and passion of a World Religion such as would have been founded if the luminous creation of the Overmind plane had been precipitated in the wake of the Descent on 24 November 1926 and not been set aside by the Mother at the command of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo wanted not this natural crowning of the cosmic movement but the evocation of the Ineffable that was behind it, the secret Supermind transcendent of all religions, whose realisation would be rather the gift of a Super-Nature than Nature's own deserved and desired achievement in the course of history—in short, a Grace of the Eternal, which can only be received and never demanded as of right. This Grace has been offered to terrestrial evolution by the birth of the Divine Mother amongst us, side by side with that of Sri Aurobindo, the Supramental Avatar.

From the viewpoint of Nature and history the dual embodiment of the Supermind is asking for the impossible. Have not all the prophets and saviours declared that, however irradiated earth might be by the Spirit, the *grand finale* is always Yonder, never Here? Out of the mind, away from the life-force, far from the body we must ultimately go if the Supreme is to be our unchanging and everlasting home: this has been the master-message of every system of spirituality. Even Vaishnavism and Tantra, which attempted to lay reshaping hands on embodied existence, knew how short they fell of the power of true transformation: even they pointed in the end to an earth-exceeding Within or a world-forgetting Beyond. All spiritual insight in the past has said that it is chimerical to hope for a mind all-knowing, a life-force all-effecting, a physical being which is perpetually young, immune to disease, free from death. Alone the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have proclaimed:

Earth's winged chimaeras are Truth's steeds in Heaven,  
The impossible God's sign of things to be.

And today—the 102nd anniversary of the Supernal Beloved's birth—the sign of the future to which our souls have been dedicated glowed bright in our consciousness, as though once again that Beloved were concretely in front of us and lavishing on us her unforgettable time-transfiguring smile.

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I am glad you are reading Shelley and Keats. Sri Aurobindo has called them the most quintessential creators of pure poetry, poetry in which all the constituents—sense-impression, emotion, thought, imagination—are turned into sheer enchanted rhythmic stuff with hardly any unalchemised residue. Entering into their world and appreciating them need not diminish your intuition of the spiritual and you don't have to feel guilty if at present they go home to you in some respects more acutely than the loftier and profounder strains of *Savitri*. By awakening certain areas of your being, Keats and Shelley will in the long run enrich your receptivity to those strains. And I may add that in *Savitri* itself I can point out on several occasions a Keatsian note or a Shelleyan accent. For that matter, various past inspirations tremble within the subtle undertones and sublime overtones of the Aurobindonian Super-Muse. Sri Aurobindo is not only the initiator of a new age of poetic utterance: he is also all poetic history summed up and surpassed, assimilated and transfigured. For he is not just one isolated individual rising to the transcendent: he is all universe representatively doing it. In him Homer lives again in an expression like

Silent he sat,  
Knowing that words are vain and Fate is lord,  
or like  
Bear; thou shalt find at last thy road to bliss.

The Virgilian cry is heard once more in

His words were theirs who live unforced to grieve  
And help by calm the swaying wheels of life  
And the long restlessness of transient things...

To skip the centuries and come down to the two poets you have mentioned, here is a happy blend of Shelley and Keats:

Adventures without danger beautiful  
In lands where siren Wonder sings its lures  
From rhythmic rocks in ever-foaming seas.

Shelley by himself may be heard in:

It saw the world from solitary heights  
Luminous in a remote and empty air.

Most of the great poets give their quota to the more abundant life that soars and sings in the Legend and Symbol of yore which Sri Aurobindo has touched to vaster issues. Furthermore, Shelley and Keats, no less than Wordsworth and Coleridge and to some extent Byron, are what Sri Aurobindo has termed "Poets of the Dawn"—mediums of the first glimmer of a spiritual Day which, because the mind of the age was unprepared, had no noon. Anticipations of the Aurobindonian Mantra thrill vaguely in all of them.

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The problem of sense and sound in poetry is as old as poetry itself. What is their relationship? I should think that there can be no poetry without the body of sound being as important as the soul of sense. I am even inclined to declare that in a true computation the sound is the soul and the sense the body. For, it is the rhythmic word-form that catches most effectively the life-throb of the poetic experience and renders the imaginative-emotional content subtler and wider than what the mind and the heart have actually compassed. It makes an aura of indefinable suggestion around the concrete and crystallised vision which can be grasped by the understanding. Sometimes just a small change in the verbal structure, with the resultant change of rhythm, can raise a line from the mental plane to "overhead". Take the verse:

Wing with far flame my speech above dull thought.

Here is a fine and forceful utterance, precise in its upliftment, but what is uplifted is the conceptual element of the line, while one is aware of some let-down in the inner being. "Dull thought" is well figured as being heavy by the double-stressed weight of the spondaic terminal foot, but this expressive effect proves to be itself a somewhat smothering defect. The far-flamey "aboveness" does not fully emerge except as a thrilling idea. Now compare with the verse the phrase:

Wing far above dull thought my speech with flame.

This is less clear-cut, but there is a deeper drive in it and the verbal structure carries one into some empyrean of the ineffable with the final word beating pinions of light onward and upward. "Dull thought" occurs where it should, in the line's middle, and left standing there by the opening imperative and the speech is freed from its drag triumphantly at the end.

Again, consider the successful movement towards a definite target in the mental-mystic articulation:

A cry to clasp in all the one God-hush.

Now shift two words—"in all"—from the exact centre of the line to the sheer close—

A cry to clasp the one God-hush in all—

and mark how the voice goes towards some distance beyond sight and gives a sense of the unutterable glimmering on the verge of speech. No doubt, the alteration of the word-order has implied an alteration of the content. "The one God-hush" which was, as it were, to be sought after, discerned and seized in all is now felt to be ever-present in them and to be taken hold of by a spontaneous in-look. Yes, a slightly different substance answers to the slightly different form, but it is by a sensitive touch on the potentialities of sound that the transfiguration has been produced. A profounder soul-rhythm has emerged through the new behaviour of the apparent word-body and has achieved an intenser stuff of meaning. The so-called outer has brought about a greater revelation of the supposed inner.

Certainly, it is the inner that has secretly worked when the poet seemed to be chiselling the outer. But the poet proceeds with quite a deal of attention to the outer in order to reach more immense realities of the inner.

(Concluded)

K. D. SETHNA

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## ROMEN

ROMEN Palit, 66, suddenly passed away owing to a heart-attack on May 5 in the midst of his work at the Centre of Education. He had been one of the few children accepted in the Ashram in its early days. During his teens he was closely associated with Amal Kiran to whose room he was a daily visitor. Sri Aurobindo once wrote that Amal's constant high expectation of work in poetry from young Romen used to help the latter write at his best even though he might be sensitive to criticism. Amal remembers Sri Aurobindo appreciating the fact that Romen exemplified to a notable degree that extremely rare combination in art: poetry, music, painting. He knows of only one other example in the Ashram of such a blending of talents: Tehmi-ben. When *Mother India* was a fortnightly it serialised for a time a long poem of Romen's entitled *Lotus Flame* and in the days when it became a monthly it published a series of studies by him of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* and for a while a number of essays on Indian novel-writing in English. *Sri Aurobindo Circle Annual* has also published some of his works. A collection of his poems—*The Golden Apocalypse*—went through the press during the early 'fifties under his fellow-poet's critical eye. Readers must be familiar with the frank and intimate correspondence between the Mother and the boy Romen published in the *Bulletin* some years back.

Most Ashramites knew his serious concentrated face. Few were aware of his keen appreciation of humour.

K. D. S.

## THE SPIRIT OF INDIAN NATIONALISM IN SRI AUROBINDO'S EARLIEST POEMS

REFERRING to a disciple's 'prodigious rapidity' in poetic creation Sri Aurobindo observed, "In England indeed I could write a lot every day but most of that has gone to the Waste Paper Basket."<sup>1</sup> Considering that the disciple referred to "used to write ten or twelve poems in a day or any number more,"<sup>2</sup> we can assume that if Sri Aurobindo wrote with the same prolificacy, hundreds of poems must have been written and thrown away by the Divine Prodigal, who even in adolescence, when one jealously guards every scrap of one's own writing, discarded the greater part of them. Sri Aurobindo himself says that at Saint Paul's "he spent much time too in writing poetry."<sup>3</sup> Only a few verses of that period have survived and they were later published under the title *Songs to Myrtila* for circulation among friends. "All of these poems in the book were written in England except five later ones which were written after his return to India."<sup>4</sup>

It may not be futile to follow in the footsteps of these poems and trace the growth of nationalism in the poet. The details of the early formative years, the foundation of Sri Aurobindo's greatness apart from his inborn talents, the other factors helping the sprouting of his genius are shrouded in shadows and are more or less a mystery. It is as if the Lord did not want them recorded for the understanding or misunderstanding of posterity. As if he had himself put a curtain, a lid which the eager research of his biographers could not pierce. Apart from some bare facts concerning his education and a few words about his worldly affairs, we hardly know anything about his inner life in England.

Sri Aurobindo once wrote to somebody, "...neither you nor anyone else knows anything at all of my life; it has not been on the surface for men to see."<sup>5</sup> Still some information surfaces sometimes as an answer to some persistent questioner who is not easily put off, sometimes to clear up the confusion created by over-enthusiastic, romantic or misinformed biographers. Yet even today we are mostly in the dark. Did some "hero passion"<sup>6</sup> seize him? Did "transient earthly love assail"<sup>7</sup> him? Did he, the born Divine Warrior, never despair like ordinary mortals at the terrible hardships, hunger and cold he had to bear? All these things his spiritual children, his disciples, would like to know, but the Lord willed otherwise.

Two things are clear. One, that at the onset Dr. Krishna Dhan Ghosh, Sri Aurobindo's father, was against everything Indian. To quote Sri Aurobindo himself:

<sup>1</sup> *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 26, p. 225.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.   <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Sri Aurobindo to His Biographers.

<sup>6</sup> *Savitri*, p. 367.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

“Dr. Krishna Dhan Ghosh, a man of great ability and strong personality, had been amongst the first to go to England for his education. He returned entirely anglicised in habits, ideas and ideals, so strongly that his Aurobindo as a child spoke English and Hindustani only and learned his mother-tongue only after his return from England. He was determined that his children should receive an entirely European upbringing. While in India they were sent to an Irish nuns' school in Darjeeling and in 1879 he took his three sons to England and placed them with an English clergyman and his wife with strict instructions that they should not be allowed to make the acquaintance of any Indian or undergo any Indian influence. These instructions were carried out to the letter and Aurobindo grew in entire ignorance of India, her people, her religion and her culture.

“Yet later on the veneer of anglicisation started cracking and the Indian, the nationalist, in Dr. K. D. Ghosh woke up and he started sending to his sons the newspaper *The Bengalee* with passages marked relating cases of maltreatment of Indians by Englishmen and he wrote in his letters denouncing the British Government in India as a heartless government.”<sup>1</sup>

So it is clear that nationalist sentiments ruled Sri Aurobindo from an early age. Here again, to quote Sri Aurobindo's own words: “At the age of eleven Aurobindo had already received strongly the impression that a period of general upheaval and great revolutionary changes was coming in the world and he himself was destined to play a part in it. His attention was now drawn to India and this feeling was soon canalised into the idea of the liberation of his own country. But the ‘firm decision’ took full shape only towards the end of another four years.”<sup>2</sup> “He had already in England decided to devote his life to the service of his country and its liberation.”<sup>3</sup>

So in a way Sri Aurobindo's father became instrumental in kindling the flame of nationalism and in concretising Sri Aurobindo's decision to liberate India. The second noteworthy thing about this period is the severe difficulties Sri Aurobindo had to face while in England. Let him speak again:

“During a whole year a slice or two of sandwich, bread and butter and a cup of tea in the morning and in the evening a penny saveloy formed the only food.”<sup>4</sup>

We have the picture of a youth burning with fires of nationalism, above fear of poverty or privation who, “...spent most of his spare time in general reading, especially English poetry, literature and fiction, French literature and the history of ancient, medieval and modern Europe.”<sup>5</sup>

In this context somebody wrote:

“In much of Aurobindo's early English verse written between his eighteenth and twentieth years in England and included in *Songs to Myrtilla*, the derivative

<sup>1</sup> *S.A.B.C.L.*, Vol. 26, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.



element is prominent. Not only are names and lineaments and allusions foreign in their garb, but the literary echoes are many and drawn from many sources.”<sup>1</sup>

Sri Aurobindo replied to this comment, “Foreign to what? He knew nothing about India or her culture, etc. What these poems express is the education and imaginations and ideas and feelings created by a purely European culture and surroundings—it could not be otherwise. In the same way the poems on Indian subjects and surroundings in the same book express the first reactions to India and Indian culture after the return home and first acquaintance with these things.”<sup>2</sup>

It is a sweet journey to follow in the footsteps of Sri Aurobindo’s early poetry and trace the first dawns of the Indian Spirit.

This poet who was transported to an alien culture at the tender age of eight and was kept ignorant of his own heritage—how and when did he discover his Indian moorings?

I will base this quest or rather this pilgrimage on the poems printed in the second edition of *Songs to Myrtilla* which was a reprint of the first edition—there being no copy of the first edition with the Ashram’s Archives. This second edition was printed at “Lakshmi Vilas Printing Press Co. Ltd.”, Baroda. Unfortunately the date of publication has not been printed in the book. But it can be assumed that it was before 1907 because Sri Aurobindo’s brother Manmohan Ghosh to whom the poems were dedicated, refers to the book in a letter written in 1907 as “Auro’s book.”<sup>3</sup>

Significantly this edition has twenty-one poems. They are in order—1. Songs to Myrtilla. 2. O Coil, Coil. 3. Goethe. 4. Ferdinand Lassalle.<sup>4</sup> 5. Charles Stewart Parnell. 6. Hic Jacet. 7. Lines on Ireland. 8. On a Satyr and Sleeping Love. 9. A Rose of Women. 10. Saraswati with the Lotus. 11. Night by the Sea. 12. The Lover’s Complaint. 13. Love in Sorrow, 14. The Island Grave. 15. Estelle. 16. Radha’s Complaint in Absence. 17. Radha’s Appeal. 18. Bankim Chandra. 19. Madhu Sudan Dutt. 20. To the Cuckoo. 21. Envoy.<sup>5</sup>

It is interesting to note that some of these poems may have been written at Saint Paul’s, earlier than even 1892. This assumption is corroborated by Sri Aurobindo’s line—

“Poor maimed children born of six disastrous years.”<sup>6</sup>

Here Sri Aurobindo refers to his earlier poems. He returned to India in 1893. So some of the poems according to the above line might have been written even as early as 1885-86.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Information Peter Heehs, Archives.

<sup>4</sup> This poem is captioned “The Lost Deliverer” in the 3rd edition published at Arya Publishing House, College Street Market, Calcutta 1923.

<sup>5</sup> In the 2nd edition this poem has no title. We find the title ‘Envoy’ for the first time in the 3rd edition.

<sup>6</sup> *S.A.B.C.L.*, Vol. 5, p. 28.

Out of these twenty-one poems the later five according to Sri Aurobindo were written by him after returning to India. These five must be 16. Radha's Complaint in Absence. 17. Radha's Appeal. 18. Bankim Chandra. 19. Madhu Sudan Dutt and 20. To the Cuckoo. Though there is no date to the poem 'Envoi' it must have been written in England and has been placed at the end due to its aptness as the final poem.

The whole poem gives the impression that the poet is still in England. When somebody wrote in a biographical sketch 'He cast one last look at his all but adopted country and uttered his parting words in 'Envoi', Sri Aurobindo corrected him thus, "No, the statement was of a transition from one culture to another. There was an attachment to English and European thought and literature, but not to England as a country..."<sup>1</sup>

The above statement also shows that 'Envoi' was written in England. Two other poems—'Lines on Ireland' and 'Saraswati with the Lotus' were written in 1896 and 1894 respectively. My purpose being to trace the national spirit and love of the mother-country in his earliest poems written in England, I leave these two aside for they were written after Sri Aurobindo's return to India. Poems 8 and 9 are translations from Meleager and Plato and were later put amongst other translations done by Sri Aurobindo and have been printed in the Centenary Volume No. 8, p. 411. Thus only twelve poems are left for study for the present purpose.

In these twenty-eight pages of the second edition we often glimpse Sri Aurobindo's Indian spirit declare itself like the first sweet rays of a dawn which later on dazzled the world with its fiery efflorescence and shook mighty England. Let us look at each of the twelve.

The first poem, "Songs to Myrtilla" is very western. The names of persons, flowers and trees, terms like 'Dryad' and 'Naiad' show clearly the influence of "the divine Hellenic Muse",<sup>2</sup>—except for the use of the name Myrtilla. Myrtle is a plant sacred to Venus but also intimate to Indian life. Though this connection may seem to be a flight of fancy, or stretching things too far, there is no harm in mentioning it since Sri Aurobindo says, "There is nothing like chance."

The second poem of the collection, "O Coil, Coil", is as thoroughly Indian as "Songs to Myrtilla" is European. Here we find a panorama wholly of India. As if the young poet was reclining in an Indian grove on the banks of some Indian river and not on the rolling green of the English countryside. Not only does the word 'Coil' remind us of scented mango groves of benign Indian plains but also the entire imagery of the poem is Indian. When the poet addresses the coil as "envoy of the spring"<sup>3</sup> we are filled with the sense of mango blossoms on Indian soil. The trees mentioned in the poem—

"The soft asoka's bloom"<sup>4</sup>—

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 26, p. 7.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 10.      <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

“Thy voice, O coil, in the peepel tree”<sup>1</sup>—

are indigenous to India and alien to England. Some hidden empathy transports the poet almost bodily to his Mother country. Though totally immersed in western culture, and though nurtured on the very sap of an alien soil yet his soul for a stanzaed moment throws away the trappings of this other culture and gently drifts into an Indian spring and the glorious songster’s “too happy voice” becomes hard to bear in his forlorn state. Still more compellingly Indian are the four lines:

“Thou by the waters wailing to thy love,  
O chocrobacque! have comfort, since to thee  
The dawn brings sweetest recompense of tears  
And she thou lovest hears thy pain....”<sup>2</sup>

The poetic legend of the bird ‘chocrobacque’ being parted for the whole of the night from his mate and their crying with anguish throughout the night and reunion only at dawn is surely a thing of the epic age of Sanskrit literature.. This poem carries such an intense Indian aura that one doubts whether it could have ever been written in England.

The next two poems ‘Goethe’ and ‘Ferdinand Lassalle’<sup>3</sup> yield nothing for our purpose. The fifth and sixth ‘Charles Stewart Parnell’ and ‘Hic Jacet’ are addressed to one of the greatest Irish patriots whom Sri Aurobindo admired and praised<sup>4</sup>. At that time Ireland like India was suffering under the yoke of British rule. And Sri Aurobindo identifies himself with Parnell, and India with Ireland when he writes:

“O pale and guiding light, now star unsphered,  
Deliverer lately hailed, since by our lords  
Most feared, most hated, hated because feared,  
Who smot’st them with an edge surpassing swords!”<sup>5</sup>

Here the words “our lords” clearly emphasize the fact that Sri Aurobindo was conscious of the bond of slavery common to his country and Parnell’s. And maybe that is why he put so much force in these two poems—a cry of one oppressed in sympathy with another similarly trodden under the same feet.

Sri Aurobindo, the supreme strategist, could not have yet revealed himself to adversary. Before he could allow the British to handcuff and lodge him in

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> This poem was later on named “The Lost Deliverer”.

<sup>4</sup> *S.A.B.C.L.*, Vol. 1, pp. 97, 637.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 15.

Alipore jail, a whole fallen race, a slumbering nation waited to be awakened, inspired, regenerated and upraised towards the dawn-washed pinnacles of patriotism.

Yet that spirit, large as the universe which abhorred all oppression and still more the cruel and unjust rule, of the Anglo-Saxon race, surfaced forcefully, though veiled, in these two poems addressed to Parnell. In the last line of the above passage—

“Who smot’st them with an edge surpassing swords!”

we get a lightning glimpse of a hero’s wrath, held in leash with difficulty, striking out at the oppressor. One almost hears in this last line giant echoes of a mighty blow struck by the ingathered soul force of the young poet.

Or take the following lines of ‘Hic Jacet’—

“True that her puissance will be easily past,  
The vision ended; she herself has cast  
Her fate behind her: yet the work not vain  
Since that which once has been may be again,  
And she this image yet recover, fired  
With godlike workings, brain and hands inspired,  
So stand, the blush of battle on her cheek,  
Voice made armipotent, deeds that loudly speak,  
Like some dread Sphinx, half patent to the eye,  
Half veiled in formidable secrecy.”<sup>1</sup>

It can’t be fancy’s play to imagine that the poet is referring to his own Mother India. Surely the prophecy and the assurance “Since that which once has been may be again” is more apt for India than for Ireland. These lines unveil an aspect of Mother India, a veritable golden Durga beautiful with the “blush of battle on her cheek”, an aspect which is dearest to the heart of the brave, who by her battle-cry’s dreadful vibrations weakened the foundations of the British empire and were later to dance an ecstatic war-dance on its ruins—that proud empire where the sun never set and yet which within a span of half a century was no more. The time had not come for the Mother to fully unveil her burning visage which is so dreadful to the Asura. So she stood “half patent to the eye”, and half veiled in that spirit-secrecy whose purpose the impure cannot penetrate. Nor can the unjust fathom those future depths where nemesis awaits them. Yet the seer vision of the Avatar poet saw the serried ranks of the sacrifice—inspired, death-espousing freedom-fighters who later on, eager to lift the crushing yoke from the Mother’s breast, vied with one another to fling their lives on her altar as things of no value.

After some years in India itself not unveiling fully his purpose to the English

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

people—he the patriot without peer, the fiery revolutionary, again declares from behind the name of Ireland in the poem named “Lines on Ireland” the glorious past greatness and the radiant future face of Mother India:

“ .. her weak estate  
 Could not conceal the goddess in her gait;  
 Goddess her mood. Therefore that light was she  
 In whom races of weaker destiny  
 Their beauteous image of rebellion saw;  
 Treason could not unnerve, violence o’erawe—  
 A mirror to enslavèd nations, never  
 O’ercome, though in the field defeated ever.”<sup>1</sup>

The poignant sorrow of a son of India—the country which was never truly defeated and whose invincible spirit was never overcome—is reflected in the anguished phrase

“...though in the field defeated ever.”

In the vision of Sri Aurobindo the nation, whose heroes once were hailed as succouring even the gods and whose bravery like an impenetrable shield protected the weak, would be once again an “image of beauteous rebellion”, a beacon-light to the subject races of Asia and Africa.

The seventh poem, “Night by the Sea”, has a direct reference to himself as an Indian. In the words of the Aurobindonian scholar K. D. Sethna—

“Line 19 of stanza 8 asking the beloved to keep safely shut in her white bosom his own heart

Like a rose of Indian grain,<sup>2</sup>

is interesting because for the first time the poet refers to anything Indian and even directs, though obliquely, the reference to himself.”<sup>3</sup>

The eighth poem, “The Lover’s Complaint”, and the 10th and 11th poems, “Island Grave” and “Estelle”, are purely creations of the Greek and Latin muse. There is no trace of nationalism there. In the ninth poem “Love in Sorrow” we find a veiled reference to himself:

And even my mother bade me homeless roam.<sup>4</sup>

Next came the significant lines of this poem which are the forerunners of the declaration in “Envoi”. The poet has awakened fully to his great vision and glorious

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Sri Aurobindo—The Poet*, p. 333.

<sup>4</sup> *S.A.B.C.L.*, Vol. 5, p. 22.

future. But these we will take up a little later.

Thus we come to the poem "Envoi". There is a Latin epigraph to it from Virgil:

"Ite hinc, Camenae, vos quoque ite jam, sane  
Dulces Camenae, nam fatebimur verum  
Dulces fuistis, et tamen meas chartas  
Revisitote sed pudenter et raro."<sup>1</sup>

T. H. Warren translates it in verse:

"You too, sweet Muses mine, farewell,  
Sweet Muses mine, for truth to tell  
Sweet were ye once, but now begone;  
And yet, and yet, return anon,  
And when I write, at whiles be seen  
In visits shy and far between."<sup>2</sup>

Virgil turned from poetry to philosophy but in Sri Aurobindo's case it was a quantum jump, a divine revolution, a change of plateau of Consciousness and action.

In the glorious past of India all endeavours—spiritual or mundane, high or low, esoteric or exoteric—Dharma, Artha, Kama or Moksha—were suffused and filled either with an undercurrent or an overflow of spirituality.

At the dawn of the freedom-struggle the seer Bankim Chandra fused spirituality and nationalism in his great novel *Anand Math* where the sanyasins of India, instead of losing themselves in some beatific Nirvana, fight for the liberation of Mother India. Sri Aurobindo started from this point and made spirituality and nationalism concomitant like a glorious and invincible union of Ganges with Yamuna. And he raised the pitch of this sacred search of the liberation of the Motherland to an empyrean height supported by the 'tapas' of many a Bhagirath of India's sacred past and upheld by the mighty godhead of Sanatana Dharma. His diamond gaze penetrated to its deepest core the ultimate possibility in poetic creation based on the godheads of the Greek muse and rejected it as an insufficient means or aim for the oceanic depths and Himalayan elevations of his 'mission'. And having realised something of his inborn greatness he had declared in the earlier poem "Love in Sorrow":

"And I had wronged my youth and nobler powers  
By weak attempts, small failures, wasted hours."<sup>3</sup>

He had heard the mellifluous notes of Saraswati's veena and this call he could ignore

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Sri Aurobindo—The Poet*, pp. 336-337.

<sup>3</sup> *S.A.B.C.L.*, Vol. 5, p. 22.

no more. The last three lines of the poem "Envoi" are a sacred invocation, a divine mantra of spiritual nationalism.

Here Sri Aurobindo's heart renounces alien culture, as if the goddess within has chosen its high paths and lofty pinnacles. These lines are a transition from the western poise of consciousness to an Indian poise:

"Me from her lotus throne Saraswati  
Has called to regions of eternal snow  
And Ganges pacing to the southern sea,  
Ganges upon whose shores the flowers of Eden blow."<sup>1</sup>

The poet abandons all that "the divine Hellenic Muse"<sup>2</sup> could offer. As if a quiescent millennial memory of a sacred consciousness, the memory of the Motherland and its heritage become alive. The glories of the west were seen, lived and ultimately felt as insufficient—

"Pale poems, weak and few, who vainly use  
Your wings towards the unattainable spheres,  
Offspring of the divine Hellenic Muse,  
Poor maimed children born of six disastrous years!

Not as your mother's is your wounded grace,  
Since not to me with equal love returned  
The hope which drew me to that serene face  
Wherein no unrepentful light of effort burned."<sup>3</sup>

It is as if the young poet came to know that his destiny lay on another dazzling ascension. For he realised that this source of inspiration, this fount of creativity, though very great, as is proved by the following descriptions — "that serene face", "divine Hellenic muse", "Not as your mother's is your wounded grace"—is not for him. His destiny lay elsewhere. A great future's seeds were sown. All that the young spirit had known—the vivid force of Shakespeare, the concentrated power of Dante, the variety and vastness of Goethe, the massive majesty of Milton, the very best of the European muse—was not sufficient to quench the limitless thirst of his oceanic heart. Something of that western heritage is glimpsed in the lines from another later poem, "To a Hero-Worshipper":

"Mine is not Byron's lightning spear,  
Nor Wordsworth's lucid strain

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

Nor Shelley's lyric pain,  
 Nor Keats' the poet without peer.  
 I by the Indian waters vast  
 Did glimpse the magic of the past."<sup>1</sup>

In the past the nine muses of Greece had attracted him by their magic colours and he had wooed them assiduously, but now the limpid transparent Ganges only could fulfil his widened consciousness with Valmiki's *Ramayana*, Vyasa's *Mahabharata*, Sri Krishna's unparalleled *Gita*. The mantric power of Vedic and Upanishadic hymns called to him incessantly.

The 'call' which later on led him to climb step by step on to the high plateau of India's glorious creations of the past and finally to exceed them all by his own supreme epic, the master-creation, the mahamantra '*Savitri*'—this call of the lyre of Saraswati had clearly pierced and permeated each layer of his consciousness. His soul had awakened to his mission and as if by avowing and declaring the greater force of Saraswati compared to the 'divine Hellenic Muse' he opened the path for the coming of *Savitri*—the highest instrument of liberation, regeneration and transformation.

In the inspired words of K. D. Sethna, "The great and high work is symbolised by the call of Saraswati who is the Goddess not only of poetry but of all learning, spiritual and secular, and of perfection in life's organisation. Perhaps 'the regions of eternal snow' stand for pure spiritual wisdom, the pacing 'Ganges' for the majestic flow of the wisdom-touched soul through life's lands until it joins the ocean of the Infinite, and the flowers of Eden for the perfected happy details of those soul-fertilised places."<sup>2</sup>

In this poem Sri Aurobindo forcefully brings out the feeling that "the highest in him stood unliberated and inarticulate,"<sup>3</sup> that "Greek Art and Philosophy, in spite of the transcendental ideal they envisaged, were directed more towards moral and aesthetic ends than towards strictly spiritual fulfilment: a certain indispensable inwardness was lacking, which only India could give to the Indian in Sri Aurobindo, with her agelong yogas, sadhanas and soaring tapasyas, her incessant cry to what the Veda had called the Dawn of God..."<sup>4</sup>

It was as if from an alien ground suddenly sprouted the long stem of a heavenly lotus which was to bloom later in an effulgence undreamt-of on the earth. The seal of the Avatar glowed on the forehead of the dreamy youth lost in the impersonal maze of London—where his friends were poverty, cold and hunger, where he subsisted on the bounty of landladies while his idealistic father gave his money to the poor.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Sri Aurobindo—The Poet*, p. 338.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.



Was it night or day, sunny or cloudy, was he walking or musing in his room when he felt Saraswati calling him to the sky-crowned Himalayas and the earth-blessing Ganges?

Sri Aurobindo's acceptance of the call is the stamp of Divine Approval on the coming of a new era, a golden age—the age of Truth. It is as if through the last lines of the "Envoi" the lord said,

तथास्तु "So may it be."

SHYAM KUMARI

### Note

Apart from the above-mentioned poems one more poem "The Vigil of Thaliard" was written in England. In this poem there are two casual references to India—

- a. "Or spotted panther by a lake  
Beneath the Indian Stars."<sup>1</sup>
- b. "A scented volume spiced with Ind."<sup>2</sup>

S. K.

<sup>1</sup> *S.A.B.C.L.*, Vol. 5, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

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## THE LAMP BURNS ON

INDICATIONS, guidelines are writ large all around  
In light and sound, musings, even in dreams.  
Lessons are yet to get home in consciousness.  
At times the impact is sweeping and profound.  
The mind crows down like the once-proud poplar  
Facing the onslaught of a raging storm,  
Kissing mud and dirt, but still not breaking.  
The storm passes; the poplar-mind vainglorious  
Pops up its audacious head skyward again,  
An arrogant proclamation of abject servitude to desires.  
The jasmine-white texture of truth blackens  
With the blemish of wilful ignorance.  
Benignity waits; Her lamp of compassion burns on.

DEBANSHU

## NEW POETRY IN TAMIL

*Boswell: Then, Sir, what is poetry?*

*Johnson: Why, Sir, it is much easier to say what it is not. We all know what light is; but it is not easy to tell what it is.*

ONE hundred and thirty years ago, an American poet named Walt Whitman (1819-92) brought out a collection of his twelve poems titled *Leaves of Grass*.

While many critics and reviewers coolly ignored the work, a couple of reviewers said that the author was a criminal monster, "as unacquainted with art as a hog is with mathematics" and demanded that he be publicly flogged. The poet too excused himself for stepping into this new venture and said: "I expected hell, and I got it." But to his grieved mind Emerson's generous and whole-hearted appreciation of what he called Whitman's "free and brave thought" and "courage of treatment" came as manna in a howling wilderness.

Walt Whitman, no doubt, rebelled against regular metres and evolved his own type of free verse for his own type of expression. However, this is not to say that his poetry is without order, but only that "the order is based on the speaking or chanting voice rather than on the traditional English or classical prosody, so that the phrase, regulated by the breath rather than the foot, becomes the basic unit, which is then developed on a large scale in the poems in parallelism and repetition—rhetorical devices, but ones which give Whitman a chanting insistent rhythm rather than a studied, well finished effect. The only earlier poetry that could have acted as a model is that of the Old Testament, and Whitman often uses biblical phrases and vocabulary."<sup>1</sup>

Emile Zola, the French novelist, once said, "First they will start laughing at my works. But that will end in copying them." His words turned out true in the case of Walt Whitman. Very soon "the good grey poet" became a model to almost all modern American poets. Poets in England, Italy, France and Latin America were in his debt. Many Indian poets too fell under the spell of this new "free verse".

In Tamil literature Mahakavi Subramania Bharati, an impressive rebel and reformist poet, greatly influenced by Whitman's poetry, began to write his prose-poems. Under the title 'Sun' he wrote:

"What have you done to darkness, O Sun?  
Did you banish her from the universe?  
Or did you kill her?  
Or did you wolf her down?  
Or did you lock her in an embrace,  
and hide her from our sight  
with your enfolding rays?  
Is darkness your foe?  
Is she your nourishing diet?"

Or is she your sweetheart?  
 Why was she gloomy?  
 Was it because she had not seen you  
 throughout the night?  
 Is it that the moment she sighted you  
 she joyfully merged with you?  
 Are you the children of the same mother?  
 Are you instructed by your mother  
 to look after the world alternately?  
 Are you deathless? Are you Gods?  
 I adore you. I idolize you, O Sun!"<sup>2</sup>

The best vehicle to express one's experiences, feelings and thoughts would be poetry. But at certain stages poetry loses its power. And it is there that prose comes to the rescue. Bharati was not unaware of it and hence he boldly indulged in the art of writing prose-poems later to be known as New Poetry.

Regarding 'form' in new poetry Bharati wrote under the title 'Shakti':

"Before me lies a cotton-stuffed pillow.  
 It has a shape—a definite form.  
 Shakti protects the form.  
 And this pillow can be protected  
 as long as human beings dwell on the earth.  
 The pillow if renewed now and then  
 will remain durable.  
 If not, the form of the pillow  
 will undergo a change.  
 Remove the stuffed cotton  
 from the soiled and worn-out pillow  
 full of holes and stuff it into  
 a new mattress and throw away  
 the useless cloths. The form is now destroyed.

Forms change but Shakti remains constant.  
 Energy is immanent in everything.

Those who give much importance only to form  
 are liable to lose Shakti."<sup>3</sup>

In fact Bharati claimed that all his poems were new in form and content. Hence it would be no exaggeration to call him "the Morning Star of Tamil New Poetry".

The advent of Bharati's prose-poems certainly gave a definite new form to the

realm of Tamil literature. He was widely acclaimed throughout the subcontinent as the poet who pioneered a new epoch of prosody at the turn of the century. Though many admired his novel venture, none dared to follow the pattern he had set.

New Poetry imported from America was on the verge of death in Tamilnadu when suddenly two famous fiction-writers made bold to adapt the dying form to express their thoughts. They were Na. Pitchamurthy, a lawyer by profession, and his next-door neighbour Ku. Pa. Rajagopalan, a clerk in an office.

Na. Pitchamurthy was a spiritualist. He loved nature above all things under the sky and his poems are conceived and composed in the soul. His famous long poem 'The Wild Duck' made much noise in literary circles. Like the high priest of nature, William Wordsworth, Na. Pitchamurthy considered Nature as the best teacher and his poems try to justify the ways of nature to men:

"The Grace of Mother Earth  
has a perennial flow—  
Nature that never draws back  
its helping hand  
and the endless toil of creatures  
on Earth stand mountain-like  
amidst artificial din."

"The doors of morn open in the East.  
The red clouds, like women,  
bathe in the flood of light."

"Morning brandishes its sword of light  
and fells the tree of darkness."

Ku. Pa. Rajagopalan's poetry differed from Na. Pitchamurthy's only in subject-matter. He sang in praise of women. His poems glorified God's plenty found in the body of a woman. In short, they are nothing but love-poems. The poem titled 'To A Friend' speaks of his philosophy of life:

"Aren't we tired  
of thoughts and words?  
We contradicted and confuted  
and were indifferent to each other.  
Enough of it.

Let's speak no more of  
Maya and philosophy.  
Let's not try to understand them at all.

Come, let's drain to the lees  
the joy we find on earth.

Let us embrace success  
on the banks of life  
till the river of life dries  
to show up the sand dunes of death.

Let us volunteer to be slaves  
and joyfully serve life.  
We need not be ashamed of it.

But Soul and God!  
O Stop it! Over centuries  
we have spoken about them  
and they jar on our ears.

Let us have no more of it.  
Who is it that spoke of the cup of wine?  
Ah! It is Omar Khayyam! Come,  
let us be guided by him."<sup>4</sup>

The literary journals and the magazine sections of newspapers in Tamil came forward to encourage the efforts of the experimentalists by publishing them. Following the innovators of new poetry, many more poets—Ka. Na. Subramanian, Si. Su. Chellappa, Thi. Ka. Sivasankaran, Vallikannan and others—who were so far writing in traditional metres resorted to the writing of new poetry.

Readers and poets began to speak for and against the new poets and their works. Many believed that new poetry was no poetry at all. They found delight in saying, "All those who have pen and paper can churn out any number of lines of new poetry in a short period." They condemned it by raving: "It is not poetry but prose run mad." They joined hands with the American novelist William Burroughs who ridiculed the writing of new poetry in the following lines:

"Take a newspaper.  
Take scissors.  
Choose in the newspaper  
an article as long as  
the poem you intend.  
Cut out the article."

They made fun of new poetry by nicknaming it 'Prose Cutlets', 'Vegetable Briyani',

'Sired by asses and horses' and above all 'Scribblings of poetasters who know nothing about prosody'. Yet the practitioners of new poetry and their wide range of readers clamoured: "If new poetry is no poetry, where is poetry to be found?" Thus began the tug of war between the traditional poets and the new poets. Till today the clash of tradition and new ideas goes on. In spite of powerful opposing forces, new poetry continues to thrive.

What then is new poetry? Here follows a poem that defines it meticulously:

"The sceptre of Grammar  
the throne of Prosody  
the palanquin of Rhyme  
the cars of Metre  
the battalion of Chaste Language  
and Pundit Pomposity  
remain voiceless  
while Thought that is self-governed  
and parades in a democratic way  
is known as New Poetry."<sup>6</sup>

Poets using traditional metres still believe that only serious themes like God, Love, Death, etc. should form the subject-matter of poetry. But to the new poets all is grist to their ever active mill. Even the dirt in the gutter can inspire a poet. So too the M.L.A. who takes his chance in floor-crossing.

Though the poets still write about the glory of the Tamils, the natural beauty of girls, romance and linguistic parochialism, the younger generation of new poets likes to use this vehicle of thought as a weapon to be feared. Its satires on society and politics haunt us. A reading of such poems makes the readers realize how true are the words of A.E. Housman who once wrote: "If a line of poetry strays into my memory my skin bristles so that the razor ceases." Here is a sampler of three shorter poems written under the same title "Freedom":

"We got it at night.  
And the day is yet to dawn."<sup>6</sup>

"We are blind men.  
What will morning look like?"<sup>7</sup>

"The cow tethered to the peg  
with just two feet of rope  
bellowed: "Ma....."  
Somebody from somewhere came,  
untied the rope of two feet

and tied the cow with a rope  
that measured twenty feet.  
Look how the cow gambols  
as if it is free from all fetters.”<sup>8</sup>

These satires on ‘Freedom’ depict the wounded feelings of the poets and try to make a big dig at the common people who rot in ignorance thinking all the time that they are free people in a free land.

Here is an interesting epitaph on politicians:

“This man famed for  
fasting, in fact,  
does it perfectly here.  
Please do not talk of  
politics here.  
Perhaps this man  
might rise up from his grave.”<sup>9</sup>

Satire seems to be the forte of many new poets. Freedom, politics, democracy, socialism, poverty, prostitution, modern education, newspapers that cater to the need of base feelings are their targets of attack. These poets certainly expose the vices of a Guilty Age and do not hesitate to lash them. The poem that follows points out the basic difference between the rich and the poor. The readers can’t but feel the undertone of sadness and hatred in the poet. It is Mu. Vai. Aravindhan who wrote thus:

“He who eats  
only when he gets food  
is the Poor.  
He who eats  
whenever he thinks of food  
is the Rich.”<sup>10</sup>

Here is another poem that indirectly hints at the plight of countless job-seekers of India:

“It is too easy to create  
one more Himalaya in India  
by simply piling up  
the application forms  
of the job-seekers.”

As more and more poets entered the world of new poetry, new forms too cropped up. There is a recent type of poem called the Concrete Poem. It is not

intended to be read aloud at all, but to make a pleasing printed pattern on the page, a pattern often with semantic overtones. A simple example of the concrete poem is the one that immediately follows:

Q  
u  
e  
u  
e  
is crowded.<sup>11</sup>

A few poets who became tired of expressing themselves in words resorted to mathematical symbols. The best example of such an experimental poem would be the one titled 'Life: A Song' that appeared in a leading Tamil literary monthly.<sup>12</sup>

∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪  
! ! ! ! ! ! !  
+ - + - + - +  
(..)(..)(..)(..)(..)(..)(..)  
? ? ? ? ? ? ?  
· · · · · · ·  
∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩

Such poems, though at first sight they pose like the Sphinxian riddle, need no Oedipus to solve them. In several instances, the title serves as the clue to the understanding of the poem. In the poem quoted above the first line refers to the cradle song while the second refers to school where one learns with wonder. The third refers to the third stage of life—song of earning and spending. The fourth is the nuptial song suggested by two in a room. Life after marriage is more problematic but all problems have solutions and come to a stop. The fifth and sixth lines suggest these facts respectively. The last line is the Song of Eternal Rest where one sleeps in the grave.

New poetry that once underwent a great struggle to survive has now stabilised itself and has attained a respectable status in Tamil literature. Ever since new poets like Na. Kamarasan and Vairamuthu entered the magic world of Celluloid, new poetry has attained wide popularity. Illiterates too find delight in murmuring the poems at their leisure. Novelists writing serials in popular weeklies use excerpts from new poetry as preludes to their new chapters. Today it is too difficult to see any newspaper or magazine that refuses to publish new poetry.

In Calcutta, they say sarcastically, "If you throw a stone it will hit a poet." It has proved true in Tamilnadu too.

P. RAJA



## NOTES AND REFERENCES

- All the translations of new poems quoted in this article are free renderings done by the author. The experimental poem with mathematical symbols is written by the author.
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  11. Vallikannan, PUDHUKKAVITHAI: THOTRAMUM VALARCHIYUM, (Tamil) p. 156.
  12. ANNAM VIDHU THOOTHU, (Tamil) No. 5, p. 39.

## MY MIND OF LIGHT

My mind of light ascends like a soaring bird of the blue.  
 Preparing long its skyward flight in dull grey of the dust;  
 By a half-formed ear and a half-formed eye sure death to eschew  
 Now it brings into this earthliness a form of the high August.

Even in the darkness it enlarged the image of the word  
 And opened the sight of the sleeping eye the myriad to see;  
 Tuning the ear to the strains of dulcet music it stirred  
 In the lifeless seas the calm of breath for the life to be.

Not in a vessel of wants, a heart of needs, does my joy expand,  
 For passion and force of youth were hoofs of the steed of desire;  
 But quaffing the waters of confluence in a chalice grand  
 It has become the drinker of delight of an unfelt fire.

Swift to the realms of thought I rose and to silence thence,  
 As though beyond the silver ranges all my kingdoms withdrew;  
 Hushed were the thunder, lightnings, wind, the rays, the sky immense  
 And my mind of light was given to the soaring bird of the True.

AKASH DESHPANDE

# THE SONG OF THE LORD

## THE GITA WITHOUT COMMENT

*(Continued from the issue of May 1986)*

### Chapter VIII

1. Arjuna said:  
“What is the Brahman? What is the Reality of Self? What is Karma, O Best of Men? What is Material Reality and what is the Divine Reality?”
2. Who is this Power of Sacrifice and how does it come to be in the body? And how can You be known at the time of death?”
3. The Lord said:  
“The Brahman is the Supreme, the Imperishable. His unfoldment is called the Reality of Self. The emission which generates his creative nature is called Karma.
4. Material Reality is a perishable existence. I am Eternal Man, the Divine Reality and the Power of Sacrifice here Incarnate, O Best of the Embodied.
5. At the time of death, one who goes forth leaving his body, remembering Me alone, attains My Being. Of this there is no doubt.
6. And whatever being he remembers at the end as he leaves his body, to that indeed he goes, constantly absorbed in that existence.
7. Therefore remember Me always and fight. With mind and Buddhi given to Me you shall without doubt come to Me alone.
8. By obtaining oneness in Yoga, with the mind unswerving, directed at the Supreme, he goes to the divine Purusha, O Partha.
9. One who remembers at the time of death the All-knowing, the Ancient, the Sovereign, smaller than the smallest, essential to all, of unthinkable form, sun-bright from beyond darkness,
10. with his mind unmoving, with devotion, united by the power of Yoga, having placed all his energy between his eyebrows, he reaches that highest divine Purusha.
11. I will briefly explain to you that status, the Imperishable, of which the knowers of the Vedas speak and which is entered by the striving anchorites, free from longing, practising continence.
12. With all the gates controlled, with the mind confined to the heart and one’s energy placed in the head, established in the retention of oneness,
13. sounding AUM—the One Imperishable Brahman—he attains the Supreme Goal who departs remembering Me while leaving the body.
14. For the Yogi always in oneness, who always remembers Me, whose mind is nowhere else, I am easy to reach, O Partha.
15. After coming to Me they are not born again into this transient world of pain,

- for these great souls have reached the supreme fulfilment.
16. From the status of Brahma down all worlds are subject to return, O Arjuna. But on attaining Me, Kaunteya, there is no rebirth.
  17. Those who know a day of Brahma as lasting a thousand ages, those who know his night as lasting a thousand ages, they know Day and Night.
  18. At the coming of a Day all creation is born of the Non-being. At the coming of a Night it dissolves into the Non-being.
  19. All this existence is perforce re-created with the coming of Day and dissolves with the coming of Night.
  20. But beyond the Non-being is another Unmanifest, an eternal Becoming into which all existence destroyed does not perish.
  21. Called 'The Imperishable Unmanifest', it is said to be the Supreme Goal which, attaining, there is no return. That is my highest home.
  22. But that Supreme Purusha, O Partha, within which all beings stand, by which all this is pervaded, can be reached through unswerving devotion.
  23. I will tell you now, O Best of the Bharatas, the time departing Yogis return and the time departing they return not.
  24. Fire, light, day, the waxing Moon, the six months from Spring: departing in these those who know Brahman go to the Brahman.
  25. Smoke, night, the waning Moon, the six months from Autumn: then the Yogi goes to the lunar light and is reborn.
  26. Bright and dark: these two paths in the world are thought to be eternal. By one he goes not to return; by the other he comes again.
  27. Knowing these two paths, O Partha, no Yogi is deluded. Be therefore at all times one in Yoga, Arjuna.
  28. Knowing all this the Yogi goes beyond the professed results of purity in the Vedas, of sacrifice, of austerities, of gifts. He reaches his supreme and eternal Home.

OM TAT SAT

Here ends the eighth chapter called 'The Imperishable Brahman' in the Dialogue of Sri Krishna and Arjuna, in Brahman-Knowledge, in Yoga-Discipline, in the Divine Song of the Upanishads.

*Translated by* DHRUVA

## NOLINI KANTA GUPTA : A RETROSPECTION

NOLINI Kanta Gupta came back home after his release from Alipore jail. Sri Aurobindo went to Pondicherry in 1910 and settled there permanently. Nolini Kanta Gupta could not keep himself aloof for long from the magnetic influence of Sri Aurobindo and he was preparing himself for embarking on a new adventure—*una aventura spirituale*. He was harbouring the idea of leaving home to join Sri Aurobindo.

Rajani Kanta Gupta, the father of Nolini Kanta, was a leading lawyer of Nilphamari. He was sober by nature. People feared and respected him. It would not be out of place to record here an interesting incident narrated by Nolini Kanta Sarkar in his book *Hasir Antarale*.

Once Nolini Kanta Sarkar went to visit the house of his friend Nolini Kanta Gupta in Nilphamari. Being a popular singer he was asked to sing a song by the womenfolk of the household. In those days the ladies could not come out to see anybody easily. This social taboo was very much in vogue. As Mr. Sarkar began to sing Rajani Kanta who had gone out appeared on the scene. The music stopped forthwith. Everyone got terribly scared but to everybody's surprise Rajani Kanta bade the bewildered singer to keep on singing. All the listeners heaved a sigh of relief and the music continued.

Rajani Kanta was a voracious reader. Apart from bulky law books he read books on Sri Ramakrishna till late in the night. He had high hopes about Nolini Kanta and naturally thought that, being the eldest son, Nolini Kanta would shoulder the heavy responsibility of the big joint-family after his retirement. But God willed otherwise.

Nolini Kanta was seeking for an opportunity to break the news of his final departure for Pondicherry to his father. At an opportune moment he entered the room of his father and said, "I want to go to Pondicherry." The father was cut to the quick and after a little pause said to his son in a grave voice, "It's good but the path is as sharp as a razor's edge. Are you fully prepared for the hazardous trek?" Nolini Kanta did not answer and left the room silently but with the determination of carrying out his plan. He left home for good in 1926 and with his departure the father's high hopes were dashed to the ground.

Nolini Kanta was summoned by his mother to come back home to perform the last rites when his father died in 1936. Being the eldest son it was his solemn and sacrosanct duty. Nolini Kanta's answer to his mother was brief and precise, "It is not possible for me to go over there but I shall do the needful here."

The mother Kadambini visited the Ashram twice to see her son. During her sojourn in the Ashram she herself prepared food for her son and sat beside him with an air of complacency while he ate. No words were exchanged between them. She felt happy knowing that her son was held in great veneration and was so close to the Mother. Family-ties drew her away and she breathed her last in 1957. Nolini Kanta

had inherited his mother's dynamism and sobriety and the intelligence of his father.

He was chosen by the Divine to be His ideal instrument and a dedicated revolutionary turned seeker. The evolving soul was seeking for its fulfilment leaving behind the illusory worldly life. Nolini Kanta took refuge in Sri Aurobindo. As a matter of fact, Sri Aurobindo himself moulded him with love and affection and kindled in him the fire of aspiration which ultimately led him well on the way to the Supramental realisation.

SUBIR KANTA GUPTA

## AS I COME NEAR PONDY

It started happening  
As our train neared Cuddalore,  
This cleaning and sweeping  
of my inner chambers.

Invisible was the broom,  
Invisible was the mop,  
Incredible was the speed,  
Unmatched was the perfection  
With which She worked—  
Unknown to myself I must have felt  
The presence of this Sweeper-woman.

Drunk with her lingering perfume  
I limped out of the train  
Conscious of my imperfection,  
Aware of the transition  
From one mode of transport to another.

When our bus to Pondy neared the Second River  
It happened. Suns rose from inner seas  
and waves kissed the moon,  
Spotless chambers of my being  
Were filled with Her smile and Her peace and Her love.

I knew it would not last,  
That dust and dirt would soon swirl in and settle  
To await a touch of those broom-tips  
That dissolves all dust-worlds.

I know that She will always come and clean  
As only She can, when the train nears Cuddalore;  
And the One within will then fill all chambers  
With Her smile and Her peace and Her love  
When our bus nears Pondy.

Divine sweeper is yet another form  
Mother takes, even as she stoops and sweeps.  
With another hand She holds the world  
And with yet another holds aloft my little self:  
This is the Mother beyond Mother.

It is my own sweet Mother,  
 My very own,  
 Who ascends from my inner recesses  
 And fills all swept chambers  
 With Her smile and peace and love  
 Again and again and yet again  
 As I come near Pondy.

18/19/ Feb. 86

DINKAR PALANDE

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## THE MARKS OF MATURITY

**MATURE** is he, who is patient, who is willing to give up immediate pleasure in favour of the long-term gain.

**MATURE** is he, who has the ability to settle differences without resentment or anger.

**MATURE** is he who perseveres despite setbacks.

**MATURE** is he, who knows that life is too short to be wasted in prejudice, intolerance, hatred and revenge.

**MATURE** is he, who has the capacity to face disappointments and adversity without becoming bitter.

**MATURE** is he, who is humane, and who responds to the needs of others with compassion.

**MATURE** is he, who has the humility to say 'I was wrong' and the self-control not to say 'I told you so' when he is proved right.

**MATURE** is he, who does not complain that the rosebush has thorns but rejoices that it bears roses.

**MATURE** is he, whose deeds conform to his thoughts and words.

**MATURE** is he, who lives in the present without being shackled by the dead past or the unborn future.

**MATURE** is he, who strives to change things which he can and who lives in peace with things he cannot.

**MATURE** is he, who gently and constantly questions himself, 'Am I mature?'

(Reproduced from the quotation in "Auromessenger" ["Auromessenger" in English], April 1986)

# FURTHER STUDIES IN INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY

*(Continued from the issue of May 1986)*

## THE URGE FOR WHOLENESS

### **A Summary of the Presidential Address, Section of Psychology and Educational Science, Indian Science Congress, January 1946**

WHAT is the most basic urge or trend of human nature? Contemporary psychology gives many answers: sex, will for power, behaviour, reflex action, purpose and some other similar concepts. The variety of voices of these answers, different and exclusive as they are, constitute the well-known crisis in the science of psychology today.

Therefore the question—what is really the first or fundamental urge of human nature?—becomes an acute issue.

The author of this address would contend that an answer to this question can only be formulated by considering the whole phenomenon of human nature in all its ranges of experience, conscious, subconscious and superconscious. Most of the existing answers are based upon an exclusive consideration of the nature of the subconscious or a bit of bodily behaviour or some other particular fact. The superconscious experience testified to by the vast yogic, mystic and religious literature of the world and by the modern yogic practice has so far not been seriously considered by the psychologist in evolving his view of human nature. And while evolution is recognised as a fact we do not seem fully to recognise that for the understanding and explaining of a particular stage of the process the stages antecedent to it alone cannot be sufficient. McDougall affirmed 'purpose' or 'goal-seeking' as the essential characteristic of mind, yet resorted to searching for the antecedent facts of 'structural dispositions' to explain instinctive behaviour. The natural-science habit of looking for antecedents as causes seems to have influenced unconsciously even a deliberate purposivist like him.

Indian psychology, in the opinion of the author, has been thoroughly purposivistic. To it the next higher form of consciousness possible to man has been a matter of the first importance. The end towards which an evolutionary process moves is by far the most important single factor to explain the nature of the process. The antecedents come only next to it. Indian psychology discovered and ascertained the reality of a form of consciousness possessed of the quality of wholeness, a consciousness in which knowing, feeling and willing operate not through mutual stresses and strains and an economic balance of the whole, but through an essential unity and harmony. If such a consciousness is a reality then obviously our present view of mental action needs a radical re-orientation.

The author feels strongly persuaded to affirm that an evolving 'wholeness', a tendency to a progressive perfection of organisation is the principal trend not only of human nature but of organic evolution as a whole. This progressive perfection of organisation of life is more easily noticeable in the sub-human species, from the



amoeba to the ape, in an increasing adaptation to and mastery of an ever more complex environment in general. In man, however, the situation becomes changed. Through his power of thought he rises to an immensely greater capacity of dealing with his environment. But through the development of self-consciousness, which makes thinking possible, he grows aware of deep inner discords whose harmonisation becomes the new direction of evolution. Simultaneously he grows aware of the mechanism of projection, as a fact ingrained in his animal nature, and begins to recognise true causes of happenings as belonging to the forces within the personality rather than to things outside. Now the yogic fact of a fulfilled consciousness, a consciousness whole, harmonious and balanced, called by Sri Aurobindo the Psychic Consciousness, experienced and enjoyed by many individuals in the past (to that the yogic, mystic and religious literature bears wide evidence) and which is today equally well experienceable by pursuing an intensive inner discipline of life, comes closely in line with this fact of general human consciousness. The fact, no doubt, occurs under rather exacting conditions of life, but when once its character is definitely ascertained, its effects for general consciousness, which are tremendous, will become easier to determine. Even otherwise the quality of the fact, so distinct and unique, representing a form of consciousness in which the so-called fundamental polarities and dualities of the common human consciousness are made good, must irresistibly draw our attention. Further, the fact, coming as it does in the wake of the divided common human consciousness, obviously becomes the most powerful single consideration in support of the hypothesis that what human nature is tending towards is a form and status of fully organised consciousness in which its present polarities are harmonised and reconciled. But this tendency to wholeness appears to be marked by the experimental procedure, so that within the framework of general progression it becomes possible for individual men or species in the sub-human level to show signs of fixation, regression or any other form of deviation from normal behaviour.

Among contemporary psychologists we discover many direct and indirect recognitions of the fact of a whole and harmonised consciousness. Even in Freud, we read a sentence like this: "It can be easily imagined that certain practices of mystics may succeed in upsetting the normal relation between the different regions of the mind, so that, for example, the perceptual system becomes able to grasp relations in the deeper layers of the ego and in the id, which would be otherwise inaccessible to it." Dr. G. Bose, the most eminent psycho-analyst of our country, while carrying the idea of polarity to the extent of positing a counter-wish to every wish, affirms himself to be a believer in "pure consciousness as distinguished from consciousness of this or that." Further, in his theory of mind he finds it necessary to admit a principle of unity as the 'guiding principle' of all mental action. This principle, according to him, reconciles the last polarity of subject and object.

Dr. S. C. Mitra's hypothesis regarding the nature of mind possesses an obvious similarity to the view here defended, as he assumes that mind, to start with, is "in a state of perfectly stable equilibrium quite content and at harmony with itself." How-

ever, for us, such equilibrium is the evolutionary goal, not the starting-point.

McDougall too contemplates a fully integrated personality under a single master sentiment.

However, Jung stands above all in having perceived clearly and distinctly the force and the power of the psychic consciousness. He finds the ordinary psychological explanations of personality 'inappropriate' and guided by his principles of analytical psychology discovers a truly unique fact in personality. This he calls the 'centre' or 'self'. To activate the centre and live in the consciousness of the self is to live the life of wholeness. This consciousness is creatively synthetic, as it assimilates the disparate materials of our mental nature and reshapes them into the picture of wholeness. All this perception is superb. Yogic practice too, at its best, aims at nothing else than the activation of the psychic centre or the soul in its dynamic aspect.

But while the recognition of a unique centre is fine, Jung did not see that that consciousness of the centre, marked by a sense of wholeness, constitutes a higher plane than the ordinary mental consciousness. In consequence he mixed up the super-conscious with the sub-conscious and declared the Samadhi state a state of unconsciousness.

The hypothesis here presented thus commands an appreciable direct and indirect support from contemporary psychology. But it primarily relies upon its own strength and merit. It offers a theory of mind based upon the widest data of conscious phenomena, since it takes into consideration the evolutionary progress as a whole from the earliest beginnings to the stages which set the goal to the present human consciousness. It gives a coherent explanation of the normal and the abnormal consciousness. Above all, it gives a clear scientific meaning to the concept 'normal' and saves the term from being a changing social average. Lastly, affording a fuller perspective of mental life, it is capable of reconciling the conflicting stand-points of the schools of contemporary psychology. The fact of psychic consciousness is a supreme fact for psychology as it presents a form of consciousness higher than the mental and is, therefore, capable of showing the true sphere of validity of the terms of our ordinary consciousness. Sex, will for power, etc., cease to have, for the psychic consciousness, the validity they ordinarily possess. The urge for wholeness, the trend towards a fuller organisation and harmony of life, as shown by the psychic consciousness, therefore, is the most basic trend of human nature. The other answers, possessing a partial validity as they do, can be accommodated as particular instrumentations of the trend towards wholeness.

Indian psychology has indeed a great promise but the value of its peculiar stand-point and the facts discovered by it have yet to be appraised by us for the benefit of our modern psychological knowledge.

*(To be continued)*

# HALLEY—1986 !

*(Continued from the issue of May 1986)*

## Birth of Comets

JAN Oort, a Dutch astronomer, advanced a theory in 1950 regarding the origin of comets. In brief it is something like this:

More than 4.6 billion years ago a gas-cloud (known as Oort's cloud) which was perhaps a light-year in diameter, started collapsing on itself due to the gravitational force between the particles. As it collapsed it flattened into a disc. The sun was formed in the densest regions and, farther away in less dense areas, as this gas condensed the planets were born. But at the edge of the solar system there formed tiny snowballs which were bound to the sun by a very weak gravitational force. As the gravitational field of the passing stars disturbed them, they were either trapped in the solar system or completely escaped it.

Though thus accelerated inwards, most comets never get close enough to the sun. They pass undetected outside Pluto's orbit. But a few that manage to cross Pluto have their orbits altered by Jupiter's gravitational field. Once this slight deviation takes place again, the comet either heads outward or inward towards the sun. The trajectory of a comet is not smooth or so simple. The gravitational pull of a planet can change a long-period comet to a short-period comet. Neptune seems to have been responsible for having altered Halley's period from 1000 to the present 76 years.

## The Comet's Tail

As the comet enters the solar system the whole of it does not remain a frozen body. It starts getting heated up. The surface vapourizes and an envelope of gas several thousand kilometres across is formed. This envelope, known as the coma, could have an average diameter about ten times the diameter of the earth. In some cases the coma could be bigger than the sun. But the density of gases in the coma is always very low and is nearly one-millionth of the pressure we experience. In this regard, an astronomer says:

"Comets are the nearest thing to nothing that anything can be yet be called something."

The sun emits solar winds, that is, speedy electrons and protons, which blow the coma into a tail. This tail may extend to many millions of kilometres. The tail of Halley's comet could extend up to more than 150 million kilometres. But the density of the tail is lower than that of the coma. It is 1/10 trillionth as dense as the earth's atmosphere. Very rightly these have been called 'bags full of nothing'. The solar winds blow radially outward from the sun. Thus as the comet orbits the sun the tail is blown outwards: it does not trail behind the comet.

The tail glows when the comet has neared the sun. The gas molecules absorb the ultraviolet light coming from the sun and re-emit it in the visible region. However, in the process there is also a possibility that they break down into smaller molecules.

The comet in reality has two tails. The electrons and protons of the solar winds ionize the gases of the tail. These ionized molecules are affected by the magnetic field of the solar winds. This gas which is blown outwards forms one of the tails known as the plasma or the ion tail. It is long and straight and appears bluish because of the strong blue and violet emissions. But the dust particles in the tail are not affected by the magnetic field. This tail formed by dust particles is known as the dust tail. The solar gravitational field swings this tail in the direction of the cometary orbit. The dust tail appears broad and curved and is yellow in colour.

It has also been discovered recently that a comet rotates around its own axis. Halley has the same rotational period as that of the earth—24 hours. Encke has a rotational period of 6 hours. The direction of rotation as well as the period and orientation of the rotational axis affect the shape of the dust tail.

### What are the Tails made of?

Spectroscopy tells us what the elements in the tail are. It has been concluded that the 'parent' inorganic ices from which these elements can be formed are—

Ammonia ( $\text{NH}_3$ ),  $\text{NH}$ ,  $\text{NH}_2$ , hydroxyl ( $\text{OH}$ ), oxygen ( $\text{O}$ ) and water ( $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ). The organic ices are carbon ( $\text{C}_2$   $\text{C}_3$ ),  $\text{CH}$ ,  $\text{CO}$ , cyanogen ( $\text{CN}_2$ ), carbon sulfide ( $\text{CS}$ ), methane ( $\text{CH}_4$ ,  $\text{HCN}$ ),  $\text{CH}_3$ ,  $\text{CH}$  and carbon dioxide ( $\text{CO}_2$ ). The other elements observed in comets are Sodium, Calcium, Chromium, Cobalt, Manganese, Iron, Nickel, Copper, Vanadium and Silicon.

Thus every time the comet approaches the sun it loses a small amount of its mass. For a typical comet, the loss is approximately 100 billion kgs. This is not very large compared to the mass of the comet itself. Halley's mass is 10 million billion kgs. Thus Halley can make about 100,000 orbits before losing all its material. The debris of Halley is evenly distributed throughout its path. As earth's orbit intersects Halley's we are periodically showered with meteors, otherwise called shooting stars.

### Probing the Probe

Why so much interest in Halley? Comets were born along with the solar system but while the planets have undergone a considerable change in their constitution in the long passage of 4.5 billion years, the comets have preserved a good deal of information about their natal hour. If this is true, then by studying them we can get a clearer picture of how the solar system was formed and shaped. The comets have been under observation for centuries but the details of what makes up their nucleus still remains un-understood and unknown. What better way could there be than to

send observers chasing the comet's tail?

With the space-technology now at our disposal this dream is assuming a shape of reality. Recently five probes have been launched to study the comets.

The International Sun-Earth Explorer (renamed International Cometary Explorer, ICE, because it has changed its mission) was launched in August 1978 to explore Halley. It started off with a mission of studying the solar winds. On 11 September 1985 it passed within 3000 kilometres of the coma of a comet named Giacobini-Zinner. In late October it moved to more than 100 million kilometres ahead of Halley. The mission in March took it within 30 million kilometres of the comet. By 1987 the ICE will be 100 million kilometres from the earth and the earth will lose contact with it.

Japan has sent its space probe named Planet-A, launched in mid-August 1985. This craft passed Halley on March 8, 1986 approaching it within 15,000 kilometres from its nucleus. It will photograph the gas and dust surrounding the nucleus. It will also study the interaction between the comet's gases and the solar winds.

Another probe is the twin Vega spacecraft of the Soviet Union which was launched in December 1984. It headed for Venus first, where it deposited some landing probes in mid-June 1985. It then used the planet's gravity for a boost towards Halley. Vega swung close to Halley on March 8, 1986 and Vega 2 a week later.

Vega is an acronym formed from the Russian name of the mission Venera-Gallery. Ve stands for Venera which means Venus and Ga for Halley (Gallery) which begins with G in the Russian language.

As the relative speed between Vega and the comet will be high, the probes risk damage. So even though the probes are sophisticated enough to resolve features of the nucleus from very close and are also protected by a thin aluminium film, only one will venture close to the nucleus. The other will remain 9000 km from the nucleus.

One of the instruments will measure the rate at which the gases flow out of the nucleus. Another will measure temperatures of the nucleus and of the surrounding dust. Each of the Vegas also carries a magnetometer to sense magnetic fields. There is a good deal of international collaboration in these essentially Russian efforts.

The European Space Agency launched Giotto, named after the 14th century Florentine artist who painted Halley's comet. It is the most sophisticated probe coming within 500 kilometres of the comet's nucleus. It is supposed to have reached its target on March 13, 1986. The speed with which it comes closest to the nucleus is 60 km/sec. Most of the scientific measurements will begin only a few hours before the probe's closest approach. But it will be only for a short interval as the high-speed dust-particles are likely to destroy the spacecraft. A thin sheet of aluminium backed by a thicker sheet of kevlar, the substance used in bullet-proof vests, makes up the dust shield which will help to protect the probe during the early part of the mission. The other risk is of a massive dust particle colliding with the probe

and knocking it out of its alignment with the earth. The beam sent by Giotto may thus miss the earth entirely. However, if successful, Giotto will determine the composition of the coma and the chemical and physical processes within it; it will also provide a close-up picture of the nucleus, a study of the ionized gas around the comet and its interaction with the solar wind will be interesting.

### Indian Programme

In India there is a well-coordinated observational programme, called the Indian Halley Observation Programme (IHOP) to study the following topics:

- (1) The interaction of the ionic tail and the solar wind.
- (2) Well-exposed large scale photographs of the coma.
- (3) Spectroscopic observations to find valuable information about the composition of the comets. Other chemical studies are also planned.

### A Doubt

But is Halley a suitable candidate to undergo scrutiny with so many probes? No, it is not. It does not retain as much information of formation of the solar system as the new comets do. It has already visited the sun many times and because of that has changed a lot. But it is the most predictable comet. An organised mission can be sent out to it which in the case of other comets is not possible as they come suddenly without any prior indication. Halley to that extent can be pretty useful for delving into the secrets of the universe when we have the opportunity to do so.

### Is Halley Dimming?

But with the observer on earth Halley is not going to co-operate. This will be its dimmest journey to us. Descriptions of Halley's previous appearances suggest that the comet has become fainter and its period of visibility shorter at each successive return. Astronomers viewing the comet in 1835 and 1910 noticed jets of materials coming out from the comet suggesting that it might be breaking up. No one knows what's up this time.

The reasons for Halley's dimness are the following:

(1) The relative positions of the sun and Halley this time are not favourable for viewing the comet. When the comet was brightest at its perihelion on February 9, the earth and the comet were on opposite sides of the sun making it impossible to sight Halley against a blinding light.

(2) The closest distance between earth and Halley this year is more than twice what it was in 1910.

(3) In all previous visits of Halley, the light pollution was negligible: the modern city lights will make it difficult to perceive the comet which is already dim in the present début.

### Birth and Death With Halley

Mark Twain was born in the year the comet arrived in 1835 and died when it reappeared in 1910. A year before the arrival Mark Twain said, "I came into this world with Halley's comet. It's coming again pretty soon, and I expect to go out with it. It will be the greatest disappointment of my life if I don't go out with Halley's comet."

Death did not prove disappointing. The comet fulfilled his wishes. This coincidence also happened in the Ashram. Dr. Sachin Roy was born in 1910 and passed away in 1986. Was he Mark Twain reborn?

### Lucky Ashramites

Many were looking forward to seeing this once-in-a-lifetime astronomical phenomenon. But there are some lucky Ashramites who had the opportunity of seeing it twice. This is what they remember of the 1910 experience:

*Purananda-da's* face beamed with a smile when we asked him about the comet. He remembers clearly that he saw it as a boy of 11, stretching a huge and fiery tail across the sky. He also recalls that King Edward VII died in the same year (many believed that it was due to the comet) and all students had to wear a black badge for the occasion. (Note: You must have seen Purananda-da—he always wears an ochre dress.)

*Yogananda-da* (Bokul and Parul-di's uncle) was in East Bengal (Bangla Desh) when the comet appeared. He remembers faintly the appearance of the comet. He was 10 years old.

*Dikshit-bhai* (oldest member of group H) was 20 years old when he saw the comet. He was studying in Baroda at that time. He remembers that there was much fright amongst the people about the disasters to be brought about by the comet.

*Jalad-da* (Tossy-di's uncle) "I was 15 years old and was a student at Faridpur (Bangla Desh). I remember it very clearly, it had a light red tail and people were frightened to even have a look at it."

He was eager to see the comet again this time.

*Justice Chowdhury* was 12 years old and was studying in Madhya Pradesh. He remembers the comet as gay fireworks (ফুলঝুবি) in the sky. He was very curious to see it this time and compare its brightness with what he had seen 76 years earlier.

*Aruna-di* says that she and her younger sister Sahana-di were travelling from Calcutta (where they used to stay in Deshbandhu C.R. Das's house) to her grandfather's house in Dacca. On the way they saw the comet—like a star carrying a huge broom-tail. She was 14. Her sister Nolina-di saw the comet from Calcutta.

*Sahana-di* "Of course I remember seeing the comet! Oh it was fantastic, the way it spread its huge tail across half the sky in the early hours of the morning. I was a girl of 13 at Dhaka."

*Biren-da* (Press) was a child of 5 years, staying at Chittagong (Bangla Desh). He remembers it very well and told us that the comet of 1965 (Ikeya-Seki) that he saw was nothing in comparison to Halley in 1910. It cannot even be called Halley's grandson.

*Ambabhikshu-bhai* was in Gujarat when he saw the comet at the age of 10. He too remembers the death of King Edward VII attributed to the comet.

*Manibhai* was 12 when he saw it. He remembers how the tail grew gradually to a fantastic size. He recalls scientists going to Norway to study the effects of the comet on earth.

*Parichand-da* was in Murshidabad (West Bengal) and remembers having seen the brilliant glow of the comet's tail. He was eagerly waiting to see the 1986 appearance.

*Dakshinapada-da* (Pranab-da's father) was about 9 years old. He saw it every evening. He recalls that there was great excitement. It was very beautiful. People believed that a great disaster would strike. Perhaps it was the fall of the British Empire. It stretched in the sky from south to north. It was full of stars—like a peacock's feather, golden in colour.

*Meenakshi amma* (Mrs. Doraiswamy) was 10 and recalls faintly seeing the comet. A nephew of hers who was born in 1910 was nicknamed Halley.

*Dr. Dasgupta*. In 1910 his father showed him the comet and asked him to remember it as he would be seeing it a second time.

## EPILOGUE

If the advent of a comet is a disaster, one should also remember that 1910 was the year when Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry. And behold! In April, the month of his arrival here, Halley was at its brightest. The advent of the comet is indeed auspicious. Perhaps this time also, as Halley's arrival may have "spread something in the earth atmosphere to help transform it."

(Concluded)

DATTA AND SWADESH



# ON THE SEA-SHORE

## A STORY

A prayer, a master act, a king idea  
Can link man's strength to a transcendent Force,  
Then miracle is made the common rule,  
One mighty deed can change the course of things;  
A lonely thought becomes omnipotent.

*Savitri, Canto Two*

My journey from Pondicherry to Puri, from one seaside resort to another, was not for pleasure or for a pilgrimage. I went there out of necessity, to see my ailing aunt. But the strange episode I encountered there, on the sea-shore, had nothing to do with her.

On the first day, very early in the morning I went to the seaside for light exercise such as I was accustomed to do in Pondicherry. The place was lonely and dark. The sun was yet to rise. Still with the help of the torch I had with me I ventured to walk briskly along the beach. But I had to stop abruptly after a while. Someone was lying awkwardly in front of me on the sand. I focused my torch, no, he was not dead. But then my heart leapt up, "Oh, is he not Shekhar?" A little scrutiny made me sure that he was none but Shekhar, my ex-collegemate.

The shaft of light caused Shekhar to open his eyes, stretch his limbs and sit up slowly with a wide yawn. Then he looked at me in surprise. I went near, dropped down beside him and asked, "Hello, Shekhar, don't you recognise me?" He did not speak but moved his head negatively. Whereupon I told him my name and the names of our common college friends. His dumb sleepy face appeared to brighten with a faint smile of recognition. "Shekhar, what's the matter with you, have you slept here on the sand the whole night?" He brooded for a while and then said softly, "Why not, what's the harm?"

"Harm! eh, you were the best-dressed boy amongst us and used a fine car to come to college. Now you have a ragged and torn shirt, dirty pants, old shoes and an unshaven face!"

"Yes, you know...God is gambling with my life!"

"God! gambling! were you not an atheist?"

"What of that? I am still an atheist."

"You spoke of God!"

"Oh, that's nothing, simply to please you. Are you not a believer in God? In fact I am in search of, no, not of God, but of the person who made me a vagabond." I thought it must be a case of love affair, so I allowed him time to pour out his heart spontaneously. But he did not utter a word more. I kept looking at his face, now

flooded with the tender rays of the rising sun. I marked that there was no sign of sorrow, suffering, anxiety or frustration in it. Rather it expressed an inner peace and poise, a sort of deep expectation and ease.

“Whom have you been searching for, Shekhar?” I broke the silence. Perhaps he did not hear me aright. He murmured, “I looked for him in towns and villages and in most of the probable resorts of Sadhus but all went in vain: I could not find him anywhere...”

“Whom could you not find, Shekhar?”

“Whom?...” he deliberated for a long while and then said, “It’s not possible to tell everything in a word or two.”

“Why, you can speak about him in detail, what’s the hurry? Such nice surroundings...”

“Do you remember Kamalesh?”

“Kamalesh...oh, yes, yes, your bosom friend and an atheist too, perhaps a degree more than yourself, intolerant of any kind of religious dogmas, rites and rituals.”

“Yes, that’s quite right, now listen. Once we two, Kamalesh and myself were out on a tour of South and Central India. On the last leg of our tour we were waiting at Nagpur station to catch a train for Ajanta and Ellora. But the train was late by a few hours. It was early night and the waiting room was almost empty excepting a few passengers sitting here and there. To kill time I brought out my sketch book and pencil...”

“I see, so you had been pursuing your boyhood hobby till then?”

“Yes and our tour had a lot to do with it. However, just as I concentrated to select a subject for drawing, a face appeared in a vision, a face completely new and unknown to me. But I was delighted to see that with a few strokes I could sketch it most vividly, boldly and beautifully. Kamalesh who was observing my work exclaimed, ‘Wah, a fine face indeed! who is he, where and when have you seen him?’ Before I could reply I heard his startled voice, ‘Oh, here he is! Come, come, please take your seat.’ I raised my head and was astonished beyond words to see the owner of the face I had drawn, standing physically in front of us. His face was exactly as I had seen in my vision but the pattern and colour of his dress and other paraphernalia did not conform to my expectation. He sat down beside us. Just then the atheist in me woke up and I was about to react, but I controlled myself with an effort. Kamalesh could not, he reacted and asked bluntly, ‘Sadhuji, is it necessary to put on a saffron robe and a garland of rudraksha to seek God?’

“The man smiled and evading Kamalesh asked me, ‘Where do you intend to go?’ but it was Kamalesh who replied, ‘Wherever our eyes lead us. And you? Where are you yourself going?’ ‘Why, I shall follow you two,’ he answered jokingly. I burst into light laughter and thought, ‘A witty man indeed.’ Perhaps Kamalesh did not relish my attitude. Suddenly he changed his mood and implored, ‘Sadhuji, I am

an atheist, please tell me something about the existence of God so that I may become a theist.'

"The Sadhu observed instantly, 'Sir, I am a theist, please convince me about the non-existence of God so that I may become an atheist.'

" 'But what for, how will you gain by becoming an atheist?'

" 'That is best known to you. How will you yourself be benefitted by being converted to a theist?' From past experience I knew that Kamalesh was extremely short-tempered. Pushing aside argument he can come to blows at any moment. So I thought it was high time I intervened. Abruptly extending my open palm towards the Sadhu I requested, 'Sadhuji, please study my hand and tell me if my cherished wish will be fulfilled or not.'

"He smiled and playfully took my hand into his but looking into it he became a changed man at once. His humorous jolly vein gave place to a serious and anxious one. His hands trembled and eyes started glittering. In a half articulated voice he uttered, 'Danger, a great danger, who will avert it?' Kamalesh took it very lightly and retorted, 'Why, you, you will save the situation. As a preventive measure to perform yajna or any other rituals is perhaps not possible in the station. Yet surely you have some amulets, stones or herbs in your bag to be used for the purpose. Please do not worry, we shall pay you fully for it.' He assumed a mock-serious air.

"The Sadhu did not utter a word. He simply got up and left the place quietly with his face radiating a glow the like of which I had never seen in any man before. I was deeply moved and thought, 'The man who came and the one who just left the place, are they the same?' They seemed to me to be two different persons and immediately I got inspired to draw the face of the second one. I took up my pencil and sketch-book but in vain. Because instead of seeing the image of his face I went on hearing the words of his alarm, 'Danger, a great danger, who will avert it?'

"Next day, in the afternoon Kamalesh and I were heading towards Ajanta by bus. We remained absorbed in enjoying the beauty of green vegetation on both sides flooded with the rays of the declining sun till darkness descended, when we started dozing unawares. Suddenly the radiant face of the Sadhu, which I could not sketch in Nagpur station, vividly appeared before my closed eyes. And even in sleep I felt like drawing it but was disturbed as the bus stopped just then with a jerk. I opened my eyes. Lo, the Sadhu was actually standing in front. I was rather confused and, wondering about the capacity of my inner vision, did not know what to say. But Kamalesh who also saw him exclaimed, 'How is it that you are here, Sadhuji?'

" 'I already told you that my destination was the same as yours. The bus has stopped, let us get down now.' 'Get down! here? This is not Ajanta,' an astonished Kamalesh objected. 'I know, still I request you to get down here. We shall go to Ajanta tomorrow.'

"I whispered to Kamalesh, 'Perhaps he wants to take us to the Ashram of Siddha Saibaba. I had heard before that the place was somewhere nearabout.'

'Let us get down then and enjoy the fun,' replied Kamalesh in a low voice. We got down along with some other passengers. The Sadhu remained silent and serious all along but took good care of us. It is he who arranged comfortable accommodation for us for the night. We thought that he would perhaps disclose the programme next morning. So after finishing our dinner we retired by 10 p.m.

"For the first few hours my sleep was much disturbed by bad dreams. I was assailed by horrible forms and figures. But then I fell fast asleep without knowing when. Next morning I woke up fully rested, I was fresh and happy, as if I had been born anew overnight. I hurried to the Sadhu to know about our next move but could not find him in his room. I waited for him for a long time but he did not turn up. The servant had no idea about his departure. From then on I have been searching for him incessantly in all probable places."

"But what for? Did you suspect him of anything? Were your money and other belongings not in order?" At this, Shekhar cast a peculiar look at me and, turning his face aside, became absolutely silent, which made me a bit puzzled and thoughtful. Silence prevailed between us and the roaring of the vast sea in front increased and grew more mysterious.... Suddenly Shekhar opened his mouth, 'Oh yes, I have forgotten to tell you about a particular piece of news published next day in the newspaper. The actual wording I have forgotten but the substance was somewhat like this. An Ajanta-bound passenger bus collided with a loaded lorry. The driver died on the spot. But the passengers of the smashed front seats were saved by the intervention of an unknown Sadhu. A few miles before the site of the accident he got down from the bus with them for a reason best known to him, although their destination was upto Ajanta...

"'Really strange,' I said. 'Perhaps he got a premonition of the accident. But I don't understand why he did not detain the whole bus. In that case there would have been no accident at all.'

"'Yes, you are right. Who knows, probably he tried to do that and nobody paid any heed to his warning.'

"'Or it might also be that he got no premonition about the accident. It was simply a case of coincidence.'

"'Whatever it might be, somehow or other I have the conviction that it was he who saved my life.'

"That is of course..." I could not finish, I saw that casting a long shadow and bathed in the morning sun a brilliant figure was approaching us. "Just see, a morning walker like me," I observed. Shekhar looked at the figure and at once jumped to his feet. He neared the man who by then had come quite close to us, and said with a half-choked deep emotional voice, "You saved my life from the clutch of death, now tell me what should be the purpose of this life. What should I do with this life?" "It's God who saved your life, perhaps I was simply a means for that. So you have to put this question to God instead of me." "But you know, I don't believe in God." "It seems that you believe in me. I say: henceforth try to have faith in God. He

Himself will direct you in all circumstances of life. Without his guidance I could not have traced you to this place." He affectionately placed his both hands on Shekhar's shoulders.

Meanwhile I was groping within to know the identity of the man. I remembered to have seen him somewhere. But where? Suddenly a spark enlightened me, "Oh, yes, I saw him on the Pondicherry beach more than once." With folded hands he used to wait there facing the horizon for the sun to rise. I stood up to meet him but saw to my extreme surprise that they both had been walking away hand in hand leaving me alone between two vasts, the sky above and the open sea below. I looked on at their receding figures and thought that perhaps the Sadhu was leading him to his or his guru's Ashram. But strange, how Shekhar forgot me completely...!

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

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## MOMENT OF GRACE

HOME or country I do not have, O friend!  
 Aim I have none and nowhere to go.  
 My lover's meandering footprints I quest for.  
 In the hidden luminosity of His steps I happily follow.  
 Forsaken by men and gods, supported by nought,  
 With the diamond edge of an all-consuming search  
 I etch my furrows.  
 One day in this aeonic game I'm afraid somewhere  
 I may be dazzled by the glory of His unveiled face.  
 I'm so ignorant, tell me, in that apocalyptic moment of grace  
 When a shadowy cypher I sink at His feet,  
 From His viewless heights will He stoop  
 To gather up all of my dross into His gold?

SHYAM KUMARI

## RTAMBHARA

### Studies in Indology: Acharya Udayavira Sastri Felicitation Volume

#### A LETTER FROM SOCIETY FOR INDIC STUDIES

KB-32, Old Kavi Nagar, Ghaziabad-201002

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K. C. VARMA