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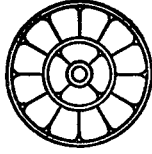
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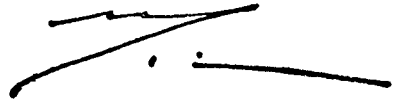


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLI

No. 12

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
THE MOTHER ON THE TRUE ASHRAMITE <i>from Huta's White Roses</i> ...	797
TWO TALKS BY THE MOTHER TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 11 AND 18 DECEMBER 1957 ...	798
AN INCREDIBLE ENCOUNTER IN A VISION IN FRANCE <i>Champaklal</i> ...	802
THE MOTHER WHOM WE ADORE IN THE LIGHT OF HER <i>Prayers and Meditations</i> <i>Nilima Das</i> ...	804
ASPIRATION (Poem) <i>Vikas Bamba</i> ...	806
VIGNETTES OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO <sup>o</sup> <i>Compiled by S</i> ...	807
HOW THEY CAME TO THE ASHRAM <i>Compiled by K</i> ...	808
YOU (Poem) <i>Marta Guha</i> ...	811
GLIMPSES OF PAVITRA FROM THE REMINISCENCES OF PAVITRA AND MRITYUNJOY ...	812
LIFE-YOGA-POETRY PASSAGES FROM SOME LETTERS <i>Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)</i> ...	816
THE STORY OF A SOUL <i>Huta</i> ...	823
SAVITRI'S HOUSE OF MEDITATION <i>R. Y. Deshpande</i> ...	829
NOLINI KANTA GUPTA BIRTH CENTENARY COMPILER'S NOTE BY SHYAM KUMARI THE BASIS OF UNITY <i>Nolini Kanta Gupta</i> ...	836
SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA <i>Nilima Das</i> ...	840

## CONTENTS

FRENCH SYMBOLIST AESTHETICS AND SRI AUROBINDO'S POETICS	<i>Dr. Nanda Kishore Mishra</i>	... 842
PEARLS IN MY POND (Poem)	<i>Shyam Kumari</i>	... 849
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE A TALE OF TWO PRINCES BY Bina Saksena	<i>Review by Maggi Lidchi-Grassi</i>	... 850
TWO REVIEWS FROM AN ENGLISH PEN VERS L'AVENIR — AUGUST 1988		... 851
MIRACULOUS GRACE OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO, BY Kripabhikshu Anil Mohan	<i>A. M. S.</i>	... 852
THE TRAITOR (Poem)		... 853

## STUDENTS' SECTION

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION TWENTY-FIFTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE — 14TH AUGUST 1988 SCIENCE AND YOGA	<i>Speech by Jayant Bhattacharya</i>	... 854
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## THE MOTHER ON THE TRUE ASHRAMITE

*What should the Ashramites, if they truly wish to transform themselves totally, do in order to make things easy for themselves, for others and for the Mother as well?*

By definition, the ashramite has resolved to dedicate his life to the Divine Realisation. But to be true to his resolution he must be sincere, faithful, modest and grateful in his consecration, because these qualities are indispensable for all progress, and progress, a steady and rapid progress is indispensable to follow the pace of Nature's evolutionary advance.

Without these qualities, one may have sometimes the appearance of progress but it is only an appearance, a pretence, and at the first occasion it crumbles down.

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

To be faithful and steady in their consecration,—not to have faith one day and the next one, because things are not as they wish them to be, to lose their faith and shelter all sorts of doubts. Doubt is not a sport to indulge in with impunity; it is a poison which drop by drop corrodes the soul.

To be modest means to have the correct appreciation of what one is, and never to forget that whatever are one's achievements, they are practically nothing in comparison with what one ought to be to fulfil the Lord's expectation.

And above all to feel in an absolute way one's own incapacity to judge the Divine and His ways.

To be grateful, never to forget this wonderful Grace of the Supreme who leads each one to his divine goal by the shortest ways, in spite of himself, his ignorance and misunderstandings, in spite of the ego, its protests and its revolts.

The pure flame of gratefulness must always burn in our heart, warm, sweet and bright, to dissolve all egoism and all obscurity; the flame of gratefulness for the Supreme's Grace who leads the Sadhak to his goal—and the more he is grateful, recognises this action of the Grace and is thankful for it, the shorter is the way.

With acknowledgments to *White Roses*, the Mother's Letters to Huta, pp. 219-22.

## TWO TALKS BY THE MOTHER

### TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN

11 December 1957

*“Even if it be discovered hereafter that under certain chemical or other conditions Life makes its appearance, all that will be established by this coincidence is that in certain physical circumstances Life manifests, not that certain chemical conditions are constituents of Life, are its elements or are the evolutionary cause of a transformation of inanimate into animate Matter. Here as elsewhere each grade of being exists in itself and by itself, is manifested according to its own character by its own proper energy, and the gradations above or below it are not origins and resultant sequences but only degrees in the continuous scale of earth-nature.”*

*The Life Divine*, p. 829

*Sweet Mother, how did the first man appear?*

SRI AUROBINDO says here,<sup>1</sup> precisely, that if we take the scientific point of view, we see that theories follow one another with great instability, and seem more like a kind of series of imaginations than things which can be proved—if one takes the purely materialist point of view. People believe that because it is a materialist point of view, it is the easiest to prove, but quite obviously it is the most difficult. If we take the occult standpoint, there have been traditions, based perhaps on certain memories, but as they are altogether beyond any material proof, this knowledge is considered to be even more problematic than scientific imaginations and deductions. For any inner logic, it is easier to understand and admit, but one has no more proof than one has material proof that there was *one* first man or that there were several first men or that there was something which was not yet a man but almost a man. These are speculations.

Traditions—which of course are only oral traditions and from the scientific point of view quite questionable, but which are based on individual memories—say that the first man or the first human pair or the first human individuals were materialised in accordance with an occult method, something like the one Sri Aurobindo foretells for the future supramental process; that is, that beings belonging to higher worlds have, by a process of concentration and materialisation, built or formed for themselves bodies of physical matter. It probably wasn't

<sup>1</sup> ‘...if the facts with which Science deals are reliable, the generalisations it hazards are short-lived; it holds them for some decades or some centuries, then passes to another generalisation, another theory of things. This happens even in physical Science where the facts are solidly ascertainable and verifiable by experiment ..’

*The Life Divine*, p. 828

the lower species which progressively produced a body which became the first human body.

According to spiritual and occult knowledge, consciousness precedes form; consciousness by self-concentration produces its form; whereas, according to the materialist idea, it is form which precedes consciousness and makes it possible for consciousness to manifest. For those who have some knowledge of the invisible worlds and a direct perception of the play of forces, there is no possible doubt: it is *necessarily* consciousness which produces a form in order to manifest. Now, the way things are arranged on earth, it is quite certainly a consciousness of a higher order which penetrates a form and helps to transform it, so that this form may become—either immediately or through successive generations—capable of manifesting that consciousness. For those who have the inner vision and knowledge, this is absolutely beyond doubt. It is impossible for it to be otherwise. But those who start from the other end, from below, will not admit it—but all the same it is not for ignorance to dictate knowledge to wisdom! And yet, this is what it does at present. As it is easier to doubt than to know, the human mind is accustomed to doubt everything; that is its first movement, and of course that is why it knows nothing.

Conception precedes manifestation and expression, that is quite certain. And all those who have had a direct contact with the past have the memory of a kind of human prototype, far superior to mankind at present, who came on earth as an example and a promise of what humanity will be when it reaches its acme.

(*Silence*)

There is in life a certain tendency to imitate, a sort of effort to copy “something”. One can find very striking examples of this in animal life—it even begins already in plant life, but in animal life it is very striking. One could give numerous examples. And so, in that sense, one might very well conceive of a sort of effort of animal life to attempt to copy, to imitate, to create some resemblance to this ideal type which would be manifested on earth by occult means, and it was probably through successive attempts, by a more and more successful effort that the first human types were produced.

**18 December 1957**

Mother reads a paragraph from *The Life Divine*, page 829

The only really important thing modern science has discovered is that from the purely outer and physical point of view things are not what they seem to be. When you look at a body, a human being, an object, a landscape, you perceive these things with the help of your eyes, your touch, hearing and, for the details,

smell and taste; well, science tells you: "All that is illusory, you don't see things at all as they are, you don't touch them as they really are, you don't smell them as they really are, you don't taste them as they really are. It is the structure of your organs which puts you in contact with these things in a particular way which is entirely superficial, external, illusory and unreal."

From the point of view of science, you are a mass of—not even of atoms—of something infinitely more imperceptible than an atom, which is in perpetual movement. There is absolutely nothing which is like a face, a nose, eyes, a mouth; it is only just an appearance. And scientists come to this conclusion—like the uncompromising spiritualists of the past—that the world is an illusion. That is a great discovery, very great.... One step more and they will enter into the Truth. So, when somebody comes and says, "But I *see* this, I *touch* it, I *feel* it, I am sure of it", from the scientific point of view it's nonsense. This could be said only by someone who has never made a scientific study of things as they are. So, by diametrically opposite roads they have come to the same result: the world as you see it is an illusion.

Now what is the truth behind this? People who have sought spiritual knowledge tell you, "We have experienced it", but of course it is a purely subjective experience; there are as yet no grounds on which one can say absolutely that the experience is beyond question for everybody. Everyone's experience is beyond question for him. And if one takes it a little further...

In fact, the value of an experience or a discovery could perhaps be proved by the power it gives, the power to change these appearances and transform things, circumstances and the world as it appears to us, in accordance with the will that manifests through that experience. It seems to me that the most universal proof of the validity of an individual or collective experience would be its power to make things—these appearances that we call the world—different from what they are. From the subjective point of view, the effect of the experience on an individual consciousness is an undeniable proof; for one who attains bliss, sovereign peace, unchanging delight, the profound knowledge of things, it is more than proved. The effects on the outer form depend on many other things besides the experience itself—depend perhaps on the first cause of these experiences—but out of all this, *one* thing seems to be a proof which is accessible to other people as well as to the one who has the experience; it is the power over other people and things—which for the ordinary consciousness is "objective". For instance, if a person who has attained the state of consciousness I am speaking about, had the power of communicating it to others, it would be partially—only partially—a proof of the reality of his experiences; but further, if the state of consciousness in which he is—for instance, a state of perfect harmony—could create this harmony in the outer world, in what apparently is not harmony, it would be, I think, the proof most readily accepted, even by the materialist scientific mind. If these illusory appearances could be changed into



something more beautiful, more harmonious, happier than the world we live in now, this would perhaps be an undeniable proof. And if we take it a little farther, if, as Sri Aurobindo promises us, the supramental force, consciousness and light transform this world and create a new race, then, just as the apes and animals—if they could speak—could not deny the existence of man, so too man would not be able to deny the existence of these new beings—provided that they are different enough from the human race for this difference to be perceptible even to the deceptive organs of man.

From these deductions it would seem that the most conclusive and obvious aspect and the one which will probably be the first to manifest—probably—will be the aspect of Power, rather than the aspect of Joy or of Truth. For a new race to be founded on earth, it would necessarily have to be protected from other earthly elements in order to be able to survive; and power is protection—not an artificial power, external and false, but the true strength, the triumphant Will. It is therefore not impossible to think that the supramental action, even before being an action of harmonisation, illumination, joy and beauty, might be an action of power, to serve as a protection. Naturally, for this action of power to be truly effective, it would have to be founded on Knowledge and Truth and Love and Harmony; but these things could manifest, visibly, little by little, when the ground, so to say, has been prepared by the action of a sovereign Will and Power.

But for the least of these things to be possible, there must first be a basis of *perfect* balance, the balance given by a total absence of egoism, a perfect surrender to the Supreme, the true purity: identification with the Supreme. Without this basis of perfect balance, the supramental power is dangerous, and one must *on no account* seek it or want to pull it down, for even in an infinitesimal quantity it is so powerful and so formidable that it can unbalance the entire system.

Since I am speaking to you about it. I would like to recommend something to you. In your desire for progress and your aspiration for realisation, take great care not to attempt to pull the forces towards you. Give yourself, open yourself with as much disinterestedness as you can attain through a constant self-forgetfulness, increase your receptivity to the utmost, but *never* try to *pull* the Force towards you, for wanting to pull is already a dangerous egoism. You may aspire, you may open yourself, you may give yourself, but never seek to take. When things go wrong, people blame the Force, but it is not the Force that is responsible: it is ambition, egoism, ignorance and the weakness of the vessel.

Give yourself generously and with a perfect disinterestedness and from the deeper point of view nothing bad will ever happen to you. Try to take and you will be on the brink of the abyss.

# AN INCREDIBLE ENCOUNTER IN A VISION IN FRANCE

BY CHAMPAKLAL

WHENEVER I visit beautiful places and also the spots of natural grandeur, I keep on looking at them with great admiration. I also feel inclined to simply close my eyes and lie down. Today I could not control this tendency of mine, and hesitatingly I stretched myself out on the open lawn.<sup>1</sup>

As soon as I closed my eyes, I saw that it had started drizzling. It was an extraordinary rain of a golden hue. It touched my body as if I was bathing in it. But its unique feature was that it did not wet the body. I sensed the golden fluid entering into me and flowing everywhere within, with the result that I could see nothing but the golden light inside my body. Then this scene was over.

The trees in the garden turned luminous. Amongst the trees whose branches were hanging like creepers, I noticed that one tree was extending up slowly. Gradually it rose so very high that its top could not even be seen! In the meanwhile I saw a charming Being lovingly caressing the creeper-like branches with a soft sweet smile and gently gliding down. On descending, this Being came close to me and started rubbing my whole body with his two hands. I felt very good and so continued to lie down. Then this Being opened my mouth and put some white glistening liquid inside and applied something on my tongue. Then I saw myself clinging to him. He told me,

“You have to come with me. Sri Aurobindo has instructed me, ‘You have to go down. My Champaklal has come there. I had arranged his coming. You too will be glad to go to your own place.’” The Being added, “Sri Aurobindo seemed to be very pleased as he said this. I have never seen him so happy before, although many a time I have witnessed his showing pleasure without speaking. He was in such high spirits that I have no words to recount it. So, come! You do not need to do anything. Remain just as you are and go on watching what happens. You must not ask even a single question. Also, do not speak anything.” Then we started rising higher and higher from out of those hanging creepers. Finally this magnificent Being stopped.

Here I experienced a golden light radiating constantly from above. There were many persons—small as well as big. Some were moving about, several of them seemed to be doing something, but it was all hazy. I could not see anything clearly enough to know details. Then this royal Being commanded me, “Wait here. Do not move even an inch from here. I shall be back shortly.” On his return, he took me to a place and explained,

<sup>1</sup> The reason for my writing ‘could not control this tendency’ is that in such places, when I lie down, I am asked, “Dada, are you tired?” That is why I avoid it as much as I can.

“This is my residence. Here too, do not ask questions. Discern on your own whatever you can. I shall display to you my paintings here. Before that let me tell you something. But, then, no queries from you. After I have disclosed to you everything, I shall take you to Sri Aurobindo.

“For a long time I lay in a condition of so-called deep sleep. But it was not ‘sleep’ as on earth. You will understand only when you yourself experience it. I had no mind to come out of this ‘sleep’. But Sri Aurobindo aroused me in his own way, and advised, ‘Now you have to do two things. First, on earth there are many children who are my own but only some of them are in search of my light. Out of them very few know what my light is. For these children you do not have to do anything. As for those who are seeking a new light, staying here only, you have to guide them in the same manner as I helped you to paint. I myself am doing this work. When you go on earth, you will see it in several places’.”

Then this fascinating form further addressed me, “Come, I shall now show you my paintings. Try to fathom them as much as you can according to your capacity. But do not ask even one question.”

On seeing some paintings, I was simply overwhelmed with joy, and woke up. I was being told, “Sitting on the lawn is not allowed.” It was clear to me that I was not supposed to see more—that is why this came just as an excuse.

Later I came to know that the imposing figure whom I had seen was the well-known French painter Claude Monet. I was also informed of his special liking for the very trees I had seen in the vision. These trees were noticed in many of his paintings that I happened to see there. I learnt that he was very fond of gardens. He himself worked and created exquisite gardens. But what generally happens occurred also in the case of this artist. After him, those delightful gardens remained no more. However, some persons, by closely observing his paintings, have done an excellent experiment and made lovely gardens as of his time.

*(Translated from the Gujarati of Champaklal by Sushilaben with the help of Kamalaben and Champaklal.)*

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## ANNOUNCEMENT

An annual journal, *Gaveṣaṇa*, will be published from January 1989. Sponsored by the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, it will be devoted to the exposition of and research in the philosophy and yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the teachings of the Mother.

## THE MOTHER WHOM WE ADORE

### IN THE LIGHT OF HER *PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS*

WHAT is the meaning of the perfection of yogic action as experienced by the Mother? Her *Prayers and Meditations* reveals the different stages of consciousness for the true service of the Divine. In her Prayer on May 4, 1914 she describes her yogic action:

“To be merged both in Thee and in Thy work...to be no longer a limited individuality...to become the infinitude of Thy forces manifesting through one point...to be freed from all shackles and limitations...to rise above all restrictive thought...to act while remaining outside the action...to act with and for individuals while seeing only Oneness, the Oneness of Thy Love. Thy Knowledge, Thy Being... O my divine Master, eternal Teacher, sole Reality, dispel all darkness in this aggregate Thou hast formed for Thy Service, Thy manifestation in the world. Realise in it that supreme consciousness which will awaken the same consciousness everywhere.

“Oh, no longer to see appearances which incessantly change; always to contemplate in everything and everywhere only immutable Oneness!

“O Lord, all my being cries to Thee in an irresistible call; wilt Thou not grant I may become Thyself in my integral consciousness, since in truth I am Thou and Thou art I?”

The gospel of yogic action which this prayer mentions coincides with Sri Aurobindo's exposition about the service of the Divine on yogic principles, written in his book, *The Mother*. He tells some of his disciples: “Your only object in action shall be to serve, to receive, to fulfill, to become a manifesting instrument of the Divine Shakti in her works.”<sup>1</sup>

He says further: “Until you are capable of this complete dynamic identification, you have to regard yourself as a soul and body created for her service, one who does all for her sake. Even if the idea of the separate worker is strong in you and you feel that it is you who do the act, yet it must be done for her.”<sup>2</sup>

In her prayer on February 12, 1914 the Mother declares: “When, conscious with Thy supreme consciousness, one considers all earthly circumstances, one sees their complete relativity and says, ‘To do this thing or that, after all that is not of much importance; yet a particular mode of action will be the best utilisation of a certain faculty, a certain temperament. All actions, whatever they may be, even the most contradictory in appearance, can be an expression of Thy law to the extent that they are infused with the consciousness of that law, which is not a law of practical application that can be translated into principles or rules in the ordinary human consciousness but a law of attitude, of a constant and prevailing consciousness, something that cannot be expressed in formulas but may be lived.’”

Her aspiration for the service of the Divine that she has expressed in her prayer on 17th April 1914 is based on the principles of her attitude towards the perfect Divine Work:

“O Lord, O almighty Master, sole Reality, grant that no error, no obscurity, no fatal ignorance may creep into my heart and my thought.

“In action, the personality is the inevitable and indispensable intermediary of Thy will and Thy forces.

“The stronger, the more complex, powerful, individualised and conscious is the personality; the more powerfully and usefully can the instrument serve. But, by reason of the very character of personality, it easily tends to be drawn into the fatal illusion of its separate existence and become little by little a screen between Thee and that on which Thou willest to act. Not at the beginning, in the manifestation, but in the transmission of the return; that is to say, instead of being, as a faithful servant, an intermediary who brings back to Thee exactly what is Thy due—the forces sent forth in reply to Thy action,—there is a tendency in the personality to want to keep for itself a part of the forces, with this idea: ‘It is I who have done this or that, I who am thanked...’ Pernicious illusion, obscure falsehood, now are you discovered and unmasked. That is the maleficent canker corroding the fruit of the action, falsifying all its results.”

In the book, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo expounds the philosophy and thought of yogic action. He says:

“In the ordinary human existence an outgoing action is obviously three-fourths or even more of our life. It is only the exceptions, the saint and the seer, the rare thinker, poet and artist who can live more within themselves; these indeed, at least in the most intimate parts of their nature, shape themselves more in inner thought and feeling than in the surface act. But it is not either of these sides separated from the other, but rather a harmony of the inner and the outer life made one in fullness and transfigured into a play of something beyond them which will create the form of a perfect living. A Yoga of works, a union with the Divine in our will and acts—and not only in knowledge and feeling—is then an indispensable, an inexpressibly important element of an integral Yoga. The conversion of our thought and feeling without a corresponding conversion of the spirit and body of our works would be a maimed achievement.”<sup>3</sup>

“But if this total conversion is to be done, there must be a consecration of our actions and outer movements as much as of our mind and heart to the Divine. There must be accepted and progressively accomplished a surrender of our capacities of working into the hands of a greater Power behind us and our sense of being the doer and worker must disappear. All must be given for a more direct use into the hands of the divine Will which is hidden by these frontal appearances; for by that permitting Will alone is our action possible.”<sup>4</sup>

The Mother’s prayer on June 25, 1914 runs: “Art Thou not the supreme

worker? Is it not our duty to be Thy docile instruments and, when Thou puttest the instrument aside for a time, will it complain that Thou abandonest it because Thou dost not make it work? Will it not be able to enjoy calm and repose after having enjoyed activity and struggle?"

Sri Aurobindo brings to us in *The Mother* some points of similarity with the above prayer: "But a time will come when you will feel more and more that you are the instrument and not the worker."<sup>5</sup> Again in tune with the Mother's words he further says: "The joy of service and the joy of the inner growth through work is the sufficient recompense of the selfless worker."<sup>6</sup>

On June 2, 1914 the Mother tells us: "In a silent contemplation, in a mute adoration, uniting myself with all this dark and painful substance, I hail Thee, O Lord, as the divine saviour; I bless Thy love as the supreme liberator, I offer thanks for its countless boons, and I give myself fully to Thee so that Thou mayest complete Thy work of perfecting. Then identifying myself with Thy love, I am nothing but Thy inexhaustible love; I penetrate all things; living within the heart of each atom I kindle therein the fire which purifies and transfigures, the fire that never burns out, the messenger flame of Thy beatitudes, realiser of all perfections."

(*To be continued*)

NILIMA DAS

#### REFERENCES

1. *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 25, p. 15.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. 20, pp. 84-85.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
5. *Ibid.*, Vol. 25, p. 16.
6. *Ibid.*

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## ASPIRATION

A CHILD of the Mother I aspire to be,  
 A slave of her love yet in my soul free—  
 Each heartbeat of mine an echo of her name—  
 Just the thought of her is my heart's flame.  
 Her part in me has learned to pray:  
 "Lead me towards that glorious day  
 When dissolved shall be my debt to the past  
 And I'll lose all loss in her love's vast."

VIKAS BAMBA

## VIGNETTES OF THE MOTHER AND SRĪ AUROBINDO

*(Continued from the issue of 24 November 1988)*

THE year was 1957, a time when the physical presence of the Mother in day-to-day activities was very much an integral part of an Ashramite's life.

After the March Past in the Playground the Mother used to retire to her room there and give interviews. Then she came to the adjoining inner room for some refreshments. This is where Gauri waited for her and sometimes two young girls also waited with her. As soon as the Mother entered the room the girls did pranam by pressing their foreheads on the Mother's feet. She blessed them, gave them some sweets and bade them "Bon soir."

The two girls X (9 years) and Y (5 years) whiled away the time before the Mother's arrival by singing French songs, playing games or just chatting. X remembers that once they had been so absorbed in their singing that they were not even aware of the Mother until she had come and stood beside them. "Don't stop," the Mother told the children with a smile and as they finished she sang for them "Frère Jacques."

Another evening the Mother was very late in coming and Y had nearly dropped off to sleep. When the Mother entered, Y could hardly keep her eyes open. The Mother looked at her tenderly and sang a lullaby, "Dors, mon enfant."

One evening (it had been raining very heavily for several days) the Mother remarked, "Luckily you are not made of sugar." "Sugar!" both the children queried in surprise. She laughed delightedly at their expressions and answered, "Why, you would have melted in all this rain!"

Sometimes as the children waited they played a game called "Pat-a-cake" (a game played with patting of hands.) The Mother saw them playing and remarked, "I also used to play this game as a child." Then she played the game with X and told her with an encouraging smile, "Ah, ma petite, you play very well."

Once or twice the Mother called X, took her to the front room and told her, "Now you are growing to be a big girl, come and meditate beside me."

X recalls that though the memory of these incidents may have dimmed and faded a bit, what can never fade is the feel of her Divine Presence. The Mother with her dresses of delicate colours and exquisite embroidery, the lovely fragrance which emanated from her being and her smile which lit up one's whole being with delight and an intense adoration—this will always remain as fresh and beautiful as a new-blown rose.

*Compiled by S*

## HOW THEY CAME TO THE ASHRAM

14

R WAS born on 28th December, 1911, at Sialkot—now in Pakistan. His mother died when he was only three or four months old. His father, a government officer, provided for every need of his children at home. His grandmother and sister loved him and took special care of him. But in spite of material well-being, there was a lack, a want, in his heart; he was dissatisfied, felt a yearning for something he knew not what. His family members were followers of Swami Dayananda, whose “Arya Samaj” movement was at its glorious height then, especially in the Punjab. There were scholarly debates about the scriptures, singing of psalms, and discourses by learned souls. R, who was different from ordinary boys, liked to participate in these pursuits very much, and regularly attended the functions of “Arya Samaj”. He was a brilliant student, and studied in D.A.V. College, Lahore, where at that time the famous Mahatma Hansraj was the Principal.

After completing his studies R first started a business, but later, due to the second world war, took up Government service, and did his work conscientiously. During his holidays he voluntarily worked for social organisations and studied religious books, and as in his childhood took special joy in the discourses of learned scholars and philosophers. Thus, outwardly, it was a full and fruitful life; but some sense of futility, some feeling of dissatisfaction, haunted him. He searched for the reason for this feeling and thought, maybe, it was due to the lack of a mother’s love, because once he had read the book *Body and Soul* where it was stated that a mother’s love for a child was essential to make a strong foundation for the development of the mind in future life.

In 1970 at the age of fifty-nine, he retired from Government service and joined an Arya Samaj Ashram in Hardwar where he lived for five or six months. But then he left, as the life did not appeal to him. He again took up service. In 1971 his nephew was posted to Pondicherry and invited R to visit him and, if he liked the place, to settle there.

R arrived in Pondicherry, and his nephew delegated his subordinate—Dr. Bose, who was intimately connected with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram—to show him around the Ashram. R was enchanted, was won over; he wanted to settle here. Dr. Bose took him to Nolini-da and R told Nolini-da that he wanted to settle here, at his own expense to which Nolini-da replied, “For that the Mother’s permission is needed. Give me an application and a photograph.” R went out and wrote his application and stuck on it a photo which he happened to have with him, and handed in the application to Nolini-da who told him, “You will have to wait.” To which he replied, “That is no problem as I am staying with my nephew.” He had given the application to Nolini-da in the morning. In the



afternoon R went to see Nolinida, who told him that the Mother had called him.

As soon as R started to climb the staircase leading to the Mother's room, he began to feel some changes in his mind and body; he felt restlessness leaving him and a peace settling in him—that experience is difficult to describe. As he bowed to do pranam, the Mother put Her hands on his head in blessing and said, "Stay here." At that moment a wave of joy passed through him and he felt he was sitting in the lap of his own mother, for whom he had been yearning all these-years.

In his own words—"It was an unforgettable experience which gave to my mind the real joy of life and proved to be an everlasting boon."

On coming down from the Mother's room, he asked Nolini-da for accommodation, and he was sent to Madhav Pandit who was looking after Ashram housing in those days; he gave R a list of Ashram Guest Houses. Since he had offered to live at his own expense, R chose a modest room. Then he went to look at various Ashram departments and, seeing this marvellous organisation, he felt an urge to take up some work, though his original idea had been to lead a retired life. He went to Nolini-da again and offered his services, to which Nolini-da replied, "The Mother's permission will be needed," and R answered, "Please, then take her permission."

Next day Nolini-da gave him a chit to go to Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. He went with the chit to Kireet, the then Registrar of the S.A.I.C.E., who asked him about his teaching experience. R told him that he had none and that his work experience was in administration. Kireet said that he himself was looking after the administration, to which R replied, "If you would ask me to sweep your office, I would do even that willingly." Kireet asked him to come after 2/3 days and said that meanwhile he would think of some suitable work for him.

For three or four days R looked around; he met a fellow-boarder in the Guest House, who was an engineer and mentioned to him his work experience; the engineer told him, "We need someone like you for Auroville." This engineer went and told Navajata about R and Navajata at once phoned the Guest House Manager asking him to send R to him. R went to the Society Office to see Navajata who asked him to work for the Society; to which R replied, "But the Mother has given me work in the International Centre of Education." Navajata assured him. "I will get it changed."

Within a day or two R was sent to work at the Auroville Office (Design and Construction) where, after a few days, he was put in charge of the office. He had planned to work two or three hours each day—here he was so caught up in the work that he worked the whole day; it gave him the joy of meeting people coming for Auroville from all over the world and he continued this work until 1974.

While he was working for the Auroville Office, some workers were getting a stipend and others also demanded the same; R recommended their case to the

Mother, suggesting that the amount should not exceed Rs. 50/-. The case was taken to the Mother by Roger (Chief Architect of Auroville) and the Mother sanctioned the stipends and asked Roger why R's name was not on the list. Roger said R was a volunteer living at his own expense. The Mother said nothing, but the next day She ordered the rent for R's room to be changed—he was to be charged only half. R was astonished and expressed his gratitude to the Mother for Her Grace and Protection.

The day in November 1973 when the Mother left Her body, R was in Jipmer Hospital, having undergone a hernia operation, and he was anxious to go to the Ashram but the surgeon forbade him. However, disregarding the surgeon's orders, R came to the Ashram by taxi for the last darshan of the Mother and returned to Jipmer by taxi. On examining him the surgeon found that all was well and the trip had caused no damage.

In 1974 there were certain problems in Auroville and R left the work there and for some time took up work in the Society Office. In 1978, after the Mother's Birth Centenary, he was asked to manage the International Guest House which he found to be a hard and tough job. He prayed to the Mother to give him strength and courage. He started work with sincerity and strictness—some people mistook his strictness for rudeness but when they found that the working of the Guest House was more smooth and there were some real improvements, they all co-operated with him.

R had come to Pondicherry after retirement at the age of 60, thinking that he had five or six years of life left. Now sixteen years have elapsed, and at the age of 76, he is still active, like a sprightly youth, always cheerful and helpful. Many of the guests feel beholden to him for the atmosphere of comfort and security and this gives great joy to him. He cannot find words to express his gratitude to the Mother who made his retired life worth living. He says, "I confess that my life got real joy and its fulfilment only in Pondicherry after the Mother blessed me, and it is my earnest hope that my life ends here in the lap of the Mother for eternal joy and peace."

R has achieved an inner peace and lives a detached life. Even when his only son and also his nephew who had called him to Pondi both passed away, he remained serene. He is mostly inspired and guided by the following words of the Mother:

1. The more I go, the more I know, that it is in the work that Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga is done.
2. Discipline hurts a few but benefits most.
3. Be sincere and absolute in your consecration to the Divine and your life will become harmonious and beautiful.
4. Let us work as we pray, for indeed work is the body's best prayer to the Divine.
5. The Truth is in us and we have only to become aware of it.

6. Let us do our best in all circumstances, leaving the result to the Divine's decision.
7. For the work, steadiness and regularity are as necessary as skill.
8. There is no greater joy than to serve the Divine.
9. Have full faith in the Divine's Grace and the Divine's Grace will help you in every way.

*Compiled by K*

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## YOU

A GAPING rift in the sky  
 An unstoppable hole in the heart,  
 The wilderness of solitude  
 Body's separation from spirit.

You are written in the sky  
 You are wrought in the snail's whorl  
 You grow in the corn, bread of life  
 You the sea, the natal waters.

You the flower in the star  
 The singing mouth and the song  
 The crystal heart of the world  
 You the bird tossed by the clouds.

At the wedding of heaven and earth  
 Your intense note rocks the spheres,  
 You flow out in a slight smile—  
 You, you are hidden in the pain.

MARTA GUHA

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MARTA GUHA

# GLIMPSES OF PAVITRA

## FROM THE REMINISCENCES OF PAVITRA AND MRITYUNJOY

*(Continued from the issue of 24 November 1988)*

### Part 7

#### Early Days in the Ashram: 1925-1928

*Mrityunjoy continues his account of Pavitra's early years in the Ashram.*

MRITYUNJOY: At the beginning, Sri Aurobindo took special precautions that his disciples should not mix with Pavitra or behave during the table talks in too informal a way, for it might shock or disturb him. One disciple later recounted that Sri Aurobindo said to him, "You have lectured about the Supramental and the Life Divine to so many people. Now leave this man to me; do not talk or mix with him at all."

So nobody dared to talk to Pavitra. Except one simple villager, who lived just opposite to Pavitra in the first room of Rosary House. Naturally the man had to speak to him about daily necessities, and certainly Sri Aurobindo could not object. This villager was just the right companion for Pavitra at the time. It was out of the question for him to discuss anything spiritual with Philippe, for he neither knew English well nor had studied any philosophy. Soon they became good friends, this rural Indian without much learning, and the Parisian with his scientific education and refined culture, his experience of many countries and contact with people of every kind.

Now the villager was good-hearted, but also terribly anti-Christian. And for him, any European was a Christian, and therefore an Untouchable. Though he liked Pavitra for his modesty and good manners, he resented it when Pavitra offered him something to eat or drink. And he would not allow Pavitra to drink water from his *kuja*, giving the excuse that his water was old and had insects in it. Still, he couldn't protest much when Pavitra, as a matter of hygiene, insisted that he put his bedding in the sun, though to him it seemed an unnecessary waste of time. His *tamasic* disposition found no necessity in doing that; but to the Parisian it was extremely important. Thus the villager gradually began to cultivate the hygienic habits of the city-man. On the other hand, the Parisian could not appreciate his companion's peasant way of wearing his *dhoti* above the knees; as he once said, not protesting but explaining, a Frenchman would be considered uncivilised if he showed his knees in public. But gradually the Frenchman not only grew accustomed to this, but himself began to adopt the Indian style of dress.

Once Sri Aurobindo sent a tomato to the villager, to be handed to Philippe, who was out giving tuition in the city at the time. Philippe was overjoyed to receive it, especially as it was sent by Sri Aurobindo. He prepared a nice drink from it, and offered a glassful to his friend. But alas, the orthodox Indian would not touch it—the preparation of a Christian—declining on the pretext that he had a cold.

About ten o'clock at night, when practically everyone else was in bed, the villager was often called by his friend to go for a walk to the beach or pier. Another surprise! "Aren't these cultured European really mad? What an idea, to go for a walk so late at night!" But he could not very well avoid it, for he was now a friend of the Frenchman. One full-moon night, the Parisian drew his attention to the beautiful moon which suggested some mystery of bliss: the villager, disconcerted, had to express his ignorance of any such suggestion.

The two were intimate now, but their relationship was not to continue much longer. The Indian was constantly getting fever. Sri Aurobindo advised him to go back to his village for a change. He did not want to go and he was rather upset. He consulted Philippe, who succeeded in convincing him to obey the Master cheerfully and go with the firm faith that it was for his own good, then to return at the proper time. So he went. Three years later he returned, in 1928, to find that a great change had come over the Arya Office. Sri Aurobindo was no longer visible as before. The Mother was in sole charge of the sadhaks, of their daily life as well as their sadhana. They no longer had to cook their own food or manage their own affairs. All belonged to one family whose members consulted the Mother and did what She told them. The villager found it hard to accept that Sri Aurobindo was no longer easily available. It took him some time to realise that since the Mother had come forward, his chance for spiritual progress was even greater than before.

Of course, he wanted to meet his old friend Philippe. But Philippe—who was now called Pavitra, the name given to him by Sri Aurobindo—could not be seen without the Mother's permission! This restriction on his freedom to visit Pavitra was hard for the villager to bear. One day, though, he met him and found, to his delight, that Pavitra was as affectionate and friendly as the Philippe he had known before. In a moment the villager forgot the present and went back to the days of their past. He asked Pavitra to prepare him some papaya juice. At last he had freed himself from the prejudice of untouchability. But the drink he had rejected so easily before was not so easy to have now. Pavitra said that he must ask the Mother about it. When the papaya drink was offered a few days later, Pavitra had indeed asked the Mother, and she had permitted him to prepare it just this once.

The physical conditions suffered by Pavitra in his first year are almost unbelievable to us now. At times he would recount them with amusement, to compare the austere old days with the easy-going life we all enjoy now. The Mother

has given comfort and convenience to us all, but previously it was unimaginable. The main reason, of course, was lack of money.

Pavitra himself did not have much money when he came; the little he had collected after selling off his things in Japan, was practically exhausted by the expenses of his trip to India. So he had to find a way to maintain himself in Pondicherry. An engineering position would take too much of his time and energy, as would establishing a chemical lab. Besides, he had found his Guru and his path lay clear before him; he needed only to earn enough to keep alive. The easiest prospect was to become a private tutor; and he found such a position in a French family, coaching some children to appear for the Baccalaureate examination in the College here. The amount he was paid was nominal, but sufficient for his simple needs.

Pavitra had to pay rent for his room, buy food and clothes and a few other necessities. He also had to do his own cooking, for which "simplest and cheapest" was the main consideration. If there was a cup of coffee and some fried beans, that would suffice for a meal. Or *kitchuri*, a mixture of rice, dal and vegetables boiled together, would save time and simplify the problem. Pavitra's room in Rosary House was a veritable godown—it did not have all the windows that are there today. Pavitra once told us with a laugh how even in the daytime, when he sat down to eat, bandicoots would come near to collect their share. At night, when he slept outside on the verandah on a mat, the rats would run over him freely. He got a cot only later on. This frugal life went on for a little over one year.

Then in November 1926 Sri Aurobindo withdrew and the Mother took charge of the disciples, dealing personally with their spiritual and material activities. Under her guidance an organised Ashram took shape. Pavitra became her invaluable aid in creating its physical framework. His mastery over material things, his wide experience of life, and his soul's surrender to her made him a precious instrument for her work.

The Mother used her spiritual powers to help the disciples live in a peaceful atmosphere of intense sadhana. In every area of human existence she organised a happier, healthier, more enlightened way of living. The ordinary routine of food and sleep, once so dull, lax and irregular, was turned into a meaningful exercise moving with the precision of a clock. The one purpose of life was to realise and manifest the Divine; everything was done with that intention. The disciples accepted her as their sole refuge in life, and she in turn accepted full responsibility for them, for their outer and inner development. In this way, the Ashram soon grew into one family, all receiving their needs from her and offering their service to her in return.

Meditation—a number of times a day—went on side by side with work. The morning meditation took place in the meditation room upstairs at 7.00 o'clock. Then the Mother would give individual interviews to the disciples, who

went to her by rotation on different days. These interviews continued up to noon. Next she went to the Dining Room (now the present Publication Department) to distribute food to them all. After the meal, there was again a meditation at 1:00 p.m. Then the Mother went to Sri Aurobindo to give him his food. At 3.00 or 4.00 o'clock she would visit sadhaks in their rooms for a few minutes, seeing a few of them each day. From 1927, when she got a car from a brother in law of Mr. Patel, she usually went for a ride from 5.00 to 7.00. Pavitra would drive. When she came back, she would go to Prosperity to check on the affairs of the stores, and from there come down to distribute the evening soup. The last meditation was at midnight.

In this way the possibility of a Divine Life on earth began to germinate in miniature form in the Ashram. The Mother gave herself completely to this task, spending almost every hour of the day with the sadhaks. She reduced her food and sleep to the minimum, almost to the breaking-point; indeed, she almost gave them up. Several times a day she would go to Sri Aurobindo to serve him his food or acquaint him with what was going on, taking directions from him if necessary. She thus was the link between Sri Aurobindo and the sadhaks, who communicated with him through letters which the Mother carried to and from him.

By 1928, the small old houses on the plot adjoining Library House were being bought. They have all been demolished now to make the big courtyards of the Ashram. Pavitra was shifted to one of them, a little two storeyed house in the centre of the small courtyard near the Mother's first room in Meditation House. Pavitra's house had only one small room upstairs, with a door facing an open terrace that led to the Mother's bathroom. Crossing that terrace, the Mother would come to Pavitra's room. When she went down to the car for her afternoon drive, or in the evening when she went to the Prosperity room, she would always pass through Pavitra's room. Descending his staircase, she would walk a few steps across the courtyard, go up the staircase at the foot of the present Samadhi, and pass through Champaklal's or Anilbaran's room in order to enter "Prosperity"; there she spent a while looking into the accounts of the daily expenditure for the garden, kitchen, general stores, and so on. During all these activities, Pavitra followed her like a shadow.

*(To be continued)*



# LIFE-YOGA-POETRY

## PASSAGES FROM SOME LETTERS

BEFORE I try to answer your questions let me quote them back to you so that my reply may have a better look of relevance. You write:

“I do not wish to take up your time, but one thing I cannot stop myself from asking and that is: if we have *Savitri* with us, if we keep uttering Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s names, if we have their symbols affixed on our doors or are wearing them, if we carry the Mother’s Blessings Packet with us, can the hostile forces still come to us and try to lead us astray? If Yes, then in what and where is the protection from them? Only in our own minds and hearts? One has heard the story of an evil force having taken the form of Sri Aurobindo and dared to come to the Mother herself. For her it was child’s play to find it out, but what happens to those on a lower plane? For, despite the protection the above things offer, if the hostile forces can still dare come to mislead and harm people, where is the progress? Is it that the soul only has to be advanced—nothing else really protects? And then is it not also that the more advanced the soul the greater the attack?”

First of all, to attempt to rise higher than the ordinary consciousness, superior to the common way of living, is to open ourselves to two kinds of forces: the spiritual ones that come to help our aspiration and the anti-spiritual that endeavour to block it by creating difficulties—in both the inner life and the outer. Psychologically one has to develop the state which Sri Aurobindo describes Aswapathy as having achieved:

A poised serenity of tranquil strength,  
A wide unshaken look on time’s unrest  
Faced all experience with unaltered peace.

“Time’s unrest” is, of course, not only outside: it is also inside: our own weaknesses, our own painful responses to ordinary stimuli, our own general indispositions. These are part of what in Yoga we call the Prakriti side of us, the “nature”-component. The Purusha side, the self who watches and acts on this nature, has to develop equanimity, stand aloof unaffected and offer to the Divine all that happens for whatever result the Divine may will. The Divine’s help is always there, but we have to be prepared for hitches to our choice of the higher life. Whether we feel protected or not depends on how receptive we are to the help given to save us from being overwhelmed by the complex of events.

Secondly, the Mother’s central concern is our soul. Her blessings are for the soul’s progress. This progress may take place through various experiences which may not in every case look like the Divine’s favours. Even death may be a part

of the Divine's grace. Just because we have received the Mother's blessings we cannot expect success in all we do or a straight flower-strewn path. But once we have her blessings we can be sure that our souls are being looked after. We must constantly keep this faith burning and do our best to let the rest of our selves co-operate with the Mother-embraced soul.

Thirdly, although we may not keenly realise the fact, we do have our outer being also protected when we have turned towards the Mother. Here we must think of all the bad things that might have happened but have not. Since they have not happened we think that they could not have taken place. Sometimes we find ourselves narrowly escaping harm. Then we become aware of our good luck. But when we escape altogether we don't realise it. The harm has been avoided from the beginning. We must not doubt that the protection has been present. To put ourselves in the Divine's hands and think at the same time that the Divine is not with us every moment is irrational. It is true that the Divine, by being omnipresent, is with each person, but since we have directly dedicated ourselves to Him, He is with us in a special sense. And if that is so it is simple logic to believe that many perils are spared us by Him without any sign we might notice.

Fourthly, as we are not at all moments in conscious touch with the Mother through our souls, the protection she has granted us can be pierced by the hostile forces. The Mother has often said that the protection is not unconditional. Quite often it acts in spite of us, but there are bound to be occasions when some part of us goes out of the radiant atmosphere she puts around us and then an opportunity is given to the hostile forces to break in. Merely to keep *Savitri* with us or put the symbols of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother upon our doors or even to carry them and the Blessings Packets in our pockets does not automatically ensure protection. Of course their presence may serve to keep us reminded of the Divine and thus serve an important purpose, but just a superficial remembrance does not always work. In great crises I have seen that the sheer fact of the Blessings Packet being there is talismanic. But in such crises the consciousness also turns spontaneously to the Divine and this helps to make the special power invested in the packet hyper-effective.

Finally, there is the universal Ignorance in which all of us live. We cannot claim to be unconnected with it. One way of being connected with it is to be connected with so many people who are not consciously attempting to be in tune with the Mother. Even without this relationship our natural being has emerged from the universal Ignorance and still has links with it, mostly in our subconscious depths. Sri Aurobindo has said somewhere that blows fall on everybody as a part of their fate in common with all mankind.

I may add that calamities can become gateways for our souls towards higher realisations—provided we offer the calamities inwardly to the Divine and do our best to seek out the secret Godhead who is behind everything. The right attitude

can work wonders so far as our inner development is concerned. We must ask Sri Aurobindo: "O Lord, what is the gift you would give me through this horror of an event? In what way does your hand reach out to touch my soul across this dire hurt to my human heart?" I have known again and again in my life how the cuts from the hostile forces in the shape of calamities can go suddenly into the profound recesses of the being and prove short-cuts to a new light which had been glimpsed afar but could not be attained over years of good fortune.

(5.9.1988)

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Thanks for ringing me from distant Austria on August 15. To be thought of by you is honour enough, but to be associated in your mind with an anniversary of the epoch-making birth of Sri Aurobindo is to feel beatified and sanctified.

Thanks also, in a different-seeming yet not really unrelated dimension, for the letter-paper specially chosen by you. One of the two horse-heads printed on it has a soft inquiring look: "Am I not still dear to you?" The other eyes me quite confidently: "I know we are dear to each other." Well, horses, apart from my having loved them from early boyhood and ridden them for nearly twenty years in the past, are an important symbol of my Yoga. According to Sri Aurobindo, when the Rigvedic Rishis mentioned horses in their mystic hymns they meant the Life Force—and unless Sri Aurobindo's own Yoga is expressed in the terms of the Life Force it is not Aurobindonian at all. Did he not once write: "I have no intention of giving my sanction to a new edition of the old fiasco"? What was the old fiasco? A fine illumined state within but in the world without, in the terms of the Life Force, the same blundering self-centred restless being. The Mother has told us a story which I may put in my own words as follows. A man was deep in meditation in his room, feeling happy and elevated. Somebody knocked on his door. He got up and, opening the door, shouted: "You fool, don't you know I am meditating at this hour? How dare you come to disturb me?" The Mother commented: "This man's meditation was worth nothing!"

Not to be disturbed by anything or anybody: that could be a short definition of my attempt at Yoga. I must be pretty much of a failure in many spiritual things, but I have tried my utmost to practise equanimity. When someone comes to me without notice and apologises: "I hope I am not disturbing you", I often answer: "To say this is hardly a compliment to me. Do you think I can be disturbed so easily?" People laugh in appreciation, but I am afraid they feel encouraged to come again in the same way. And why not? Truly speaking, I don't mind their bursting upon me. They have always something interesting to say and I stand to profit in one manner or another. They too, I think, get benefited, and it is a pleasure to me to be able to give help. As for my work being interrup-

ted, a link always remains in my mind and I can carry on the work afterwards as if nothing had happened.

Now let me get back to my horses. They are not only the symbolic medium in which the soul has to fulfil its aim: "the Life Divine." To reach this fulfilment one has to note first how very human—or, as Nietzsche has said, "all-too-human"—life is. It has to be changed. The need to change it and the way to do so are the work the Avatar comes to show us. The Divine becomes human so that we may learn to make the human divine. The horses have to be controlled and trained. They have to be—scientifically speaking—*equus caballus Linn*: domesticated horses, ready to be harnessed to pull a carriage or to be saddled for a ride. Of course, to be domesticated does not mean that the animal loses its spirit. Not at all. It remains fine-strung, a sensitively fiery creature, cavorting and tossing its head, saying—as the Bible puts it—"Ha, ha" to the sound of the trumpets, but everywhere obedient to its master: the inmost self as well as the highest. It is the purified vitality serving to express an enlightened consciousness along the many-directioned paths of earth, the consciousness which Sri Aurobindo in his *Savitri* has named "Aswapathy", the heroine's father, literally "Lord of the Horse", metaphorically "Lord of Life". (14.9.1988)

\*

Quite a cataract of good luck—letter after letter rushing to me from you, bringing a multitude of thoughts and fancies and feelings. First is the big purple sun drawn by Sonia the Symbolist, along with the line which Sri Aurobindo added to *Savitri*—

And griefless countries under purple suns—

when I quoted to him Virgil's

Largior hic campos aether et lumine vestit  
Purpureo, solemque suum, sua sidera norunt.

C. Day Lewis translates these two hexameters:

What largesse of bright air, clothing the vales in dazzling  
Light, is here! this land has a sun and stars of its own.

The prose rendering I sent to Sri Aurobindo read: "Here an ampler ether spreads over the plains and clothes them in purple light, and they have a sun of their own and their own stars." In Latin the adjective "purpureus" has a double meaning: "purple" and "extra-bright". Lewis has accepted the second sense, whereas Sri Aurobindo has caught an esoteric occult hint and to my question:

“What plane is spoken of by Virgil?” he replied: “I don’t know, but purple is a light of the Vital. It may have been one of the vital heavens he was thinking of. The ancients saw the vital heavens as the highest and most of the religions also have done the same. I have used the suggestion of Virgil to insert a needed line.”

You—with your sun generously and mysteriously endowed with fourteen rays, double the ancient sacred number seven—have plunged into an entirely new dimension of sight and insight. Your focus is on “griefless”, and for you it is from the purple suns that grieflessness is radiated. You pass beyond all vital heavens which, for all their felicity, limit one and are not in inner accord with the ever-evolving human psyche. Something of a divine transcendence both of tygal worlds and of travailing earth is what you have in view. Your cry is evidently to Ahana, the God-light breaking upon the striving and aspiring human consciousness. In Sri Aurobindo’s words it would run:

Open the barriers of Time, the world with thy beauty enamour—  
Trailing behind thee the purple of thy soul and the dawn-moment’s  
glamour....

You have well distinguished past poetry from future poetry and the characteristic of the poems in my *Adventure of the Apocalypse* as freedom from “the touch of tears”, and as outflow from the “griefless countries” of the inmost self. This self reflects the Sun of Truth spoken of in the Isha Upanishad, whose “most blessed form of all” is Eternal Bhss.

You have a rare “empathic” understanding of these poems when you say that if “Griefless Countries” or “Griefless Suns” does not appeal to me for the title of my “Collected Poems” my “title should suggest fire, flame, light or radiance”. You have told me: “Your theme is always the longing to capture your shining quarry in a net of sound”. Here I am interested by your finding in me an affinity with Rimbaud rather than with Mallarmé. Perhaps the most thrilling prophecy of the new magnificence that has to emerge from the unexplored mystery beyond us is in those two lines of *Le Bateau Ivre*:

Est-ce ces nuits sans fonds que tu dors et t’exiles,  
Millions d’oiseaux d’or, ô future Vigueur?

Is it adequate to English them thus?—

Within such bottomless nights do you sleep, exiled,  
Millions of golden birds, O Force to come?

... I find most attractive and apt your definition of poetry. You have written:

“If you would like me to add something to your definitions, I would like to add Truth. You have spoken of sight and insight, light and delight, passion and peace, intensity and harmony, magic and mystery and secrecies beyond.... You will tell me truth is implied, and I know it. Nevertheless, let us say that poetry is

Words charged with the music of Eternal Truth.

I almost said:

Words lit by the lightning of Eternal Truth.

“Lightning is a most fascinating phenomenon. Did you know that it strikes upwards, not downwards, as we think? On the earth below the clouds there is a build up of positive electricity, a mirror image of the negative charge above. When the differences in potential become enormous, a leader track begins to zigzag its way to earth. But, when the leader track is within a short distance from earth, streamers leap up from earth (we don’t see them) but when one happens to make contact a brilliant spear of light soars UPWARD. It is the return stroke that we see.

“Lightning is a pretty accurate image for what happens in poetry. The aspiration builds up, leading to the unattained heights. Then contact is made, the illuminating flash occurs, the music of that inevitable line is the RETURN FLASH THAT WE SEE—

A thunder wearing the lightning’s streak of smile,

as you have written somewhere.”

Do you realise that both your definitions are themselves perfectly moulded poetry—beautiful pentameters with extremely apposite modulations on the iambic base? You begin with a striking spondee showing the full weight of the spiritual message put forth from the heights of Being. Then there is an anapaest with its quickening of the pulse, as it were—an emotional leap—as you disclose the power that has gone into the verbal form. Next is a low-stressed iamb—  
“... sic of”<sup>x /</sup>—which seems at the same time to distance and to connect the last part of the statement and the rest of it that has gone before. Thus the two concluding words stand by themselves poised on two regular iambic feet—“Eternal” significantly stretched out to three syllables quantitatively short while the single-syllabled “Truth” is an intrinsic “long” as well as the bearer of a full stress, well-fitted both ways to be the *grand finale* of a momentous penetration into the essence of poetry.

I am glad you have included “Eternal Truth” openly in this essence, thereby pointing to the loftiest range of inspiration, the Overmind which is the ultimate

fount of all poetry and whose basic motif is Truth above everything else, though this Truth, being Eternal, has always a mould of Beauty because out of an infinite self-existent Bliss it is projected into cosmic creation and activity.

The Vedic poets call themselves “seers and hearers of Truth”. Your two definitions bring in seeing and hearing, by means of the words “lightning” and “music” but in separate lines. How about trying to combine them? What about a Soniamal manifesto like

Words glowing with music of Eternal Truth?

Perhaps a more vivid present participle than “glowing” and a more multiple-meaninged sequel to it would come if we said:

Words kindling to a music of Eternal Truth.

“Kindling” is nearer to your vision of “lightning” and “to a” signifies simultaneously a passionate responding and an intense becoming. (22.8.1988)

AMAL KIRAN (K. D. SETHNA)

# THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

*(Continued from the issue of 24 November 1988)*

The Mother's Message

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



Vol. Three 1959

No. 24

GAIZMORE Hotel was a big building with rooms converted into bed-sitters. It had a good number of tenants.

My bed-sitter was on the ground floor with cooking facilities. A large window faced a small garden which was now gloomy without blooms.



Nevertheless, the weather had taken a definite turn for the better. It seemed there was a touch of spring in the air, although an early-morning chilly mist rolled on.

I tidied my room to its nooks and crannies. The drawers were pin-neat.

On week-ends I cooked in my room although my culinary skill had not reached perfection.

Twice a week a German girl came to run a Hoover in my room and change bed-sheets and pillow covers. She was cheery. Her skin was spoiled by a heavy make-up and her blonde hair hanging to her shoulders was unconfined.

A coin-operated telephone was in the hall for use by the residents. In the lounge there was a T.V. which I rarely watched because I left my house in the morning and came back late at night. For, apart from my studies, I attended my classes of flower-making, bead-work, drawing and painting.

It was a bright breezy day. I took my final test in typing at 2 p.m. The rest of the examinations would follow in June and July 1960.

I felt independent and free at my new place. I was at ease. But it was momentary, because opposite my room a woman of ninety came to stay. Her mental state was unstable. She was related to the house-keeper who was plump and short and whose prominent features were her carrot-red hair, green shadowed eye-lids and scarlet lipstick. This house-keeper kept a huge cage of vari-coloured Budgerigars which twittered incessantly.

The old mad woman drank two big bottles of whiskey per day and threw them into the passage indiscriminately. She hurled whatever things came into her hands. In the middle of the night she screamed at the top of her voice which gave me a jolt.

When I came late from the evening classes I entered my room as quietly as possible lest she should come rushing from her room and break a bottle of whiskey on my head! She had a grotesque face which terrified me.

Once I asked the house-keeper to remove her to a mental home. The old woman must have heard me and she shouted: "O you blasted girl, go to blazes!" I dashed into my room, trembling.

Then, of course, within a few days she was taken to the place where she ought to have been. Once again I was in peace.

\*

The Mother sent me the message of 4th April 1960—the day of Sri Aurobindo's first arrival at Pondicherry. It had his own handwriting and a printed copy of it. The writing ran:

"An eye that visualised the viewless planes  
Exposed the depths concealed by Nature's fronts  
Till all seemed known."

I felt blank as if I had lost all my aspiration to find and unite with the Divine. I was like an empty shell tossed haphazardly without an aim in a vast sea—enormous waves of ordeals, setbacks swept over me—there was no shore in sight—everywhere there was an oppressive darkness of unconsciousness.

Sufferings and difficulties followed me like a shadow. There was no limit to my endurance. Sometimes, vaguely a wave of thought rolled into my brain: “Why, O why did I accept the spiritual life? Why didn’t I settle down as my other sisters did?” But my heart strongly opposed and disagreed with my stupid thought. “What will be will be,” my soul whispered. I kept quiet.

\*

Time kept slipping away. It was a lovely day, the ground was crisp with frost and the sun warm and golden, promising that spring was very close.

My brothers, number three and four, who had come from East Africa, telephoned me from their hotel. So Sudha and I went to meet them. But unfortunately we were requested by a receptionist to wait in a public lounge, because they had gone out.

We entered the lounge only to be greeted by an English Pug. The dog was extremely ugly. He bounced and sniffed our clothes.

We took our seats. I viewed the room and found that at the far corner there was a woman sitting quite absorbed in reading newspapers. We too rifled through the pages of *Woman’s Own*.

Then suddenly the dog flung himself on me pawing me in excitement. I was astonished. He did the same to Sudha. But in addition he licked her cheek with ingratiating eagerness. She squirmed. Both of us got up abruptly, and called him several names in Gujarati.

The woman, time and again, peeped through the papers and seemed to relish the scene with sheer amusement.

The clock ticked past—ten and eleven—still there was no sign of my brothers.

We were irritated, annoyed, bored and tired. On top of this the wretched dog would not leave us alone. The whole situation got on our nerves. Then we thought there was no point in waiting any more. So we made a move. The dog followed suit. Meanwhile the woman called him in her high-pitched voice: “Bobo, Bobo, come here.” And Mr. Bobo obeyed her, leaving us safely to escape. Blast Bobo—we cursed him.

\*

The following day I telephoned my brothers and told them of my visit. They were sorry and asked me to meet them. Sudha could not accompany me—so I went alone and was thankful inwardly not to have re-encountered dear Bobo!

My brothers gave me all the news of our family. I was very sorry to learn about my father's poor health.

They invited me to dinner in the posh restaurant—Viraswami—at Regent's Street. As a matter of fact, it was in honour of the Managing Director of Barclays Bank D.C.O. and his wife.

My nephew Suresh, Sashi Morjaria, Manu Kotecha and I were present.

The stewards here were clad in bright Indian liveries. Everything gave the sense as if we were in India. The décor of the place was typically Indian.

We were introduced to the Managing Director and his wife. She asked me several questions regarding my stay and studies. She was all praise. I thanked her.

The long table was laid elaborately.

One of the stewards opened with ease and experience a bottle of Champagne which was nestled in a pail full of ice-cubes. He poured the frothing liquid which was a pale topaz with bubbles clinging to the edges of the crystal glasses. There were nuts to go along with the wine of celebration.

My brothers raised their glasses with good wishes. We all echoed the toasts and took repeated sips.

Then we ate a delicious dinner as course succeeded course.

At last the meal drew to an end. We all had coffee. The men took liqueurs.

The Managing Director and his wife thanked my brothers, shook hands with all of us and said good night.

I reached my bed-sitter pretty late. It had been cold for late April. I had felt chilled.

I went to bed, determined to make my mind clear of everything and go to sleep.

The morning sun peeped faintly through an enveloping mist. The usual fog was formed by the cool night air. There had been obviously a shower of rain during the night.

I stood at my window. It was the beginning of Spring! I smelt the scent of earth and felt the gentle warmth of the sun. I hummed to myself, happier than I had been in the last few weeks.

As always I did some chores in my room and went to college. There I learnt I had passed my speed test in typing. It was ninety words per minute!

The Mother sent me the message of the 24th April which I took to our spiritual meeting at Doris's flat. She read it out to us:

The Formless and the Formed were joined in her.  
 Immensity was exceeded by a look,  
 A Face revealed the crowded Infinite.  
 Incarnating inexpressibly in her limbs  
 The boundless joy the blind world-forces seek,

Her body of beauty mooned the seas of bliss.  
 At the head she stands of birth and toil and fate,  
 In their slow round the cycles turn to her call;  
 Alone her hands can change Times dragon base.  
 Hers is the mystery the Night conceals;  
 The spirit's alchemist energy is hers;  
 She is the golden bridge, the wonderful fire.  
 The luminous heart of the Unknown is she,  
 A power of silence in the depths of God;  
 She is the Force, the inevitable Word,  
 The magnet of our difficult ascent,  
 The Sun from which we kindle all our suns,  
 The Light that leans from the unrealised Vasts,  
 The joy that beckons from the impossible,  
 The Might of all that never yet came down.  
 All Nature dumbly calls to her alone  
 To heal with her feet the aching throb of life  
 And break the seals on the dim soul of man  
 And kindle her fire in the closed heart of things.  
 All here shall be one day her sweetness' home,  
 All contraries prepare her harmony;  
 Towards her our knowledge climbs, our passion gropes,  
 In her miraculous rapture we shall dwell,  
 Her clasp shall turn to ecstasy our pain.

“Savitri” III-2

SRI AUROBINDO

\*

I asked my brothers to come to my house. But they did not have the time. One of them left for Africa. The other—Maganbhai—stayed on a few days more.

He invited Sudha and me to lunch in a Chinese restaurant at Soho—the area enclosed by Oxford Street, Charing Cross Road, Shaftesbury Avenue and Wardour Street, and said to take its name from an old hunting-cry used when there were green fields here. It is made up of a network of narrow streets, and famous for its restaurants.

It was midmorning after a thickly misted dawn. Now the sky was clear. We walked through the narrow lanes and reached the Chinese restaurant. There were Chinese lacquers, paintings of dragons and draperies—different shapes and shades of paper lanterns. Even on the crockery there were Chinese designs. We felt we were in China.

A steward who took our orders was dressed in his national costume. I asked

my brother to make sure that they should not, by mistake, serve us mice, frogs or snakes or indefinable insects to eat.

He laughed and assured us that there would be pure vegetables and rice. We enjoyed our meal. Sudha and I thanked him.

The next day he left for East Africa.

*(To be continued)*

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# SAVITRI'S HOUSE OF MEDITATION

## Part One

YAMA as the Dark Terrible has snatched the soul of Satyavan and is taking it away to the Abode of the Departed located deep in the South. Savitri follows him closely, her mortal pace equalling the god's, and enters "Into the perilous silences beyond." But she is weighed down by her mortality and is afraid that the two would soon vanish out of her sight. Then, in a "moment of a secret body's sleep", after having discarded all the heavy sheaths, she moves out and surrounds Satyavan with her nameless infinity to give him love's protection. The three march on in a procession, Savitri behind Yama and Satyavan in the front. As they cross a "weird country" and reach dangerous regions of the giant Nothingness, Death, the Dark Terrible, declares to her:

This is my silent dark immensity,  
This is the home of everlasting Night.<sup>1</sup>

Savitri survives the Dread. Not only that. Like an undaunted warrior, unmindful of the hazards of the battle, she steps into the very camp of the Adversary. She is in the house where the endless Night lives for ever. Yama looks at her with a stern and tremendous gaze and forbids her to accompany them further for there even Time must die. Savitri tells him that she is not just a creature of mortality, a lump of helpless matter, but is a strength matching his own. It is with that strength she wants back

Into earth's flowering spaces Satyavan.<sup>2</sup>

Death refuses. He proclaims himself to be the sole and supreme creator who brought this universe out of his immense dark void. Savitri cannot trespass into his kingdom and violate his laws, but must return to the ways of the transient world and cling to the brief joys by which little creatures spend their days hoping for nothing else. After all, the love for which she is asking Satyavan back is but a queer passion, a fancy's fleeting fondness, if not a figure of utter falsity. He even grants her two boons: for Satyavan's father Dyumatsena kingdom and power and friends and lost greatness and royal trappings for his peaceful age and, by the second, the sensuous solace of light to eyes which could have found a larger realm, a deeper vision in their fathomless night. He asks her to turn and go back to the mortal world. But Savitri asserts that she is his equal and that the "suns were conscient in her birth." Indeed, what she is engaged in here is the "labour of the gods" and its fulfilment lies only in Satyavan's return with her to the earth. Death is not concerned about it. It is Savitri's hal-

lucination that things here can be changed. Avatar after Avatar has come and the world is the same old stuff—an inert, inconscient, ignorant mass of misery. She is a priestess in Imagination's temple. After all what is her love? It is something that has suddenly awoken because of Satyavan's death. And that too will soon fade and die when she has found the company of other men. Love, according to Death, is nothing but a habit of flesh in the darkness of the material circumstance. Life and love cannot co-exist in this physical universe with its law of gravitating heaviness; by its potency and power everything proceeds towards extreme fragmentation, towards dissolution; finally, of what she calls God's creation nothing is left.

Savitri breaks the spell of this "dangerous music" of Death and brings, in the sweetness and harmony of her words, a promise and a hope and a certitude; she is a little crescent in the sky of night cutting the gloom with the edge of her smile; she is a cradle holding in it the child of godly felicity. She forbids Death to slay her soul and asserts her right of love in the earthly groves.

My love is not a hunger of the heart,  
 My love is not a craving of the flesh;  
 It came to me from God, to God returns.  
 Even in all that life and man have marred,  
 A whisper of divinity still is heard,  
 A breath is felt from the eternal spheres.  
 Allowed by Heaven and wonderful to man  
 A sweet fire rhythm of passion chants to love.  
 There is a hope in its wild infinite cry;  
 It rings with callings from forgotten heights,  
 And when its strains are hushed to high-winged souls  
 In their empyrean, its burning breath  
 Survives beyond, the rapturous core of suns  
 That flame for ever pure in skies unseen,  
 A voice of the eternal Ecstasy.<sup>3</sup>

Savitri's love and joy, through an intensification in the person of Satyavan, become universal. The mission that bids her to love is, through its transforming alchemy, to save the world. Not corporeality but a bright spiritual yearning burns in her heart; it, like a flame, leaps to clasp in its folds the roseate body of her eternal lover. The Satyavan she is claiming is not an ordinary mortal. He is the immortal in the world of death. Since the beginning of this earthly creation they have been together, man and woman from the first, the twin souls born from one undying fire. She who came wearing a human form, that love may grow here in a happy felicitous fulfilment, is none other than the force of God; it is she who guards the seal against the rending hands of death and

makes sure that love does not cease to live upon the earth. When Savitri first met Satyavan in the Shalva Woods she immediately recognised him to be none but the God of Love behind Death; she knew he was awaiting Love's victory that a greater age be ushered in and the world opened up to the infinity of happiness and joy.

But the actualities of the world, according to Death, go to show that it is as though this lady is living in fancy's rainbow-land, in a sky of make-believe gathered from the vaporous musings of her passion-filled heart. It seems that even in that land or sky the clouds, heavy with humidity, intercept the sunlight of what she imagines to be true. How can one think of building heaven on earth when the elemental characters of the two are so sharply opposed to each other? Granting for a moment that she can dream of it, it shall be a dream bearing the stamp of her physical mind which is nothing but a product of the working of Matter in the inconscient creation. Hidden behind this vast universe the only one single all-pervasive god, holding it on his solid shoulders is the great creative Void from which Matter was born. "All upon Matter stands as on a rock." Remove that rock, knock off that base, and the entire superstructure will fall like a house of cards. Without respecting Matter, without knowing the laws of its functioning and the nature of its deep reality, without recognising the foundational aspects which sustain this massive machinery, how can Savitri hope for her love to abide and flower upon earth? Indeed, the dichotomy between Spirit and Matter is so deep and fundamental that to think they can coexist is moonshine. It is vain to conceive a spiritual world emerging from the womb of Matter. What Savitri is doing, Death tells us, is simply sending, as though in a high flight of an eagle towards the sun, words that have wings dyed in the red splendour of her heart but that lack the total substantiality of knowledge of things in their reality. Savitri's love cannot abide in Matter's house. And how was Matter formed at all? Was it not Death who had pressed the ether of the Void into Space?

A huge expanding and contracting breath  
Harboured the fires of the universe:  
I struck out the supreme original spark  
And spread its sparse ranked armies through the Inane,  
Manufactured the stars from the occult radiances,  
Marshalled the platoons of the invisible dance;  
I formed earth's beauty out of atom and gas,  
And built from chemic plasm the living man...<sup>4</sup>

Savitri must understand this and not chase will-o'-the-wisps. She must lend herself to see and recognise the laws of nature operating here, in the earthly framework of things. There is actually no room for God in this brute immensity. It is by the process of Death's Sankhya that the inconscient world arose and it is



in that sense that the world is fulfilling itself.

But the living soul of Savitri cannot be slayed by Death's words. His grim philosophy of crookedness calling Truth to defend falsehood is itself a smoke-screen, hiding behind it the sun-face of reality. She counter-argues extensively and tells him that the All-Creator, making a room for himself in Nothingness, in fact by the supreme sacrifice of his godly royalty, began to re-create out of the eternal Night his own embodied infinities, he made that Night another starting-point for a yet different kind of creative delight. What Death sees at the moment is only a half-finished world, without realising that he himself is a part of that wonderful creative delight's process by which the miracle of creation arising out of the utter Void is being worked out.

All here bears witness to his secret might,  
 In all we feel his presence and his power.  
 A blaze of his sovereign glory is the sun,  
 A glory is the gold and glimmering moon.  
 A glory is his dream of purple sky,  
 A march of his greatness are the wheeling stars  
 His laughter of beauty breaks out in green trees,  
 His moments of beauty triumph in a flower;  
 The blue sea's chant, the rivulet's wandering voice  
 Are murmurs falling from the Eternal's harp.  
 This world is God fulfilled in outwardness.<sup>5</sup>

There is the invisible Hand working quietly, doing and accomplishing everything. That Hand shall remove the mask and the screen and shall reveal to us the glorious figure of the Truth-Beauty that resides ever here. To draw from eternal Loss the plenitude of eternal Gain, of Joy, and multiply it countless is a supreme act and only a supreme omnipotence can conceive of it and dare it. God's plunge in the Night was with the intent of lifting up every bit breathing of him to worlds of a dazzling Truth-Sun. He had the glory of Being; he shall have the glory of Becoming. Because of this plunge the inconscient evolution has become possible. As a contributive part in that evolution Death has become a means of growth. Death, though apparently a power of negation, is made purposeful: by its agency all that is unworthy of transformation is dissolved into the Void. Consequently what shall emerge will be in the bright person of love, beauty, power, knowledge, the self of bliss itself. Indeed, in this entire sequence Death himself becomes the frontal aspect of the Supreme in the Inconscient; when the veil is removed we meet him as the positive element in this unfolding. Death is a mode of manifestation. Plutus, the god of wealth, mentioned by Phaedrus, is a divinity who brings forth riches from the soil. Death or Yama as the son of Vivasvan is the Truth-Sun working in the Night. Savitri knows this mystery

of Death's birth; he doesn't know it because he has chosen himself to go behind Inconscience.

Savitri asserts that it is within the Ether of Delight that God's creation breathes and lives and grows. She sings the Anthem of Felicity: if this Felicity were not there nothing would come into existence and if it should withdraw all will collapse; it is that honey-sweetness which causes the births of the gods and it is that which fosters them and gives them riches; in the overflowing of that ecstasy life and mind and body draw their nourishment; in that they increase in immortality. That is why the Rishis raise their joyous hymns to Soma, the Lord of Delight and Immortality: "O Thou in whom is the food, thou art that divine food, thou art the vast, the divine home; wearing heaven as a robe thou encompassst the march of the sacrifice. King with the sieve of thy purifying for thy chariot thou ascendest to the plenitude; with thy thousand burning brilliances thou conquerest the vast knowledge."<sup>6</sup> Or on another occasion: "Placed in delight he flows to the pleasant Names in which he increases; vast and wise he ascends the chariot of the vast sun, the chariot of a universal movement."<sup>7</sup> Savitri herself, in the lyrical sweetness of an enchantment, tells Death:

A hidden Bliss is at the root of things...  
 The All-Wonderful has packed heaven with his dreams,  
 He has made blank ancient Space his marvel-house;  
 He spilled his spirit into Matter's signs:  
 His fires of grandeur burn in the great sun,  
 He glides through heaven shimmering in the moon;  
 He is beauty carolling in the fields of sound;  
 He chants the stanzas of the odes of Wind;  
 He is silence watching in the stars at night;  
 He wakes at dawn and calls from every bough,  
 Lies stunned in the stone and dreams in flower and tree.  
 Even in this labour and dolour of Ignorance,  
 On the hard perilous ground of difficult earth,  
 In spite of death and evil circumstance  
 A will to live persists, a joy to be.<sup>8</sup>

Death remains unconvinced. He tells Savitri that it is good to imagine things that way but they are not really so. Not only imagining, Savitri is cheating herself by hiring the impudent bright thought-mind which is clever enough to supply reason to life's passion. The harsh fact is that Truth in this world is "bare like stone and hard like death," which she must accept first. Moving on a more metaphysical level, Death tries to explain to Savitri that the laws of Nature are immutable and that there is no agency which can change them. No one has succeeded and Savitri should not attempt the futile. Restoration of Satyavan's

life is against the laws of established creation and he cannot return now to earth. Instead, Savitri can have, by Death's boon, what once living Satyavan desired for her that she may surround herself with worldly happiness:

Bright noons I give thee and unwounded dawns,  
Daughters of thy own shape in heart and mind,  
Fair hero sons and sweetness undisturbed  
Of union with thy husband dear and true.<sup>9</sup>

Savitri at once rejects the boon. She desires true love's fulfilment on earth. She cannot go back without Satyavan. She doesn't want such children.

The dire debate continues with the ruthlessness of arch-enemies. If there is a fundamental antagonism between Spirit and Matter, then it is inconceivable that they should ever be reconciled with each other. That is Death's postulate and he presses his argument forward almost with the thrust of violence:

Where Matter is all, the Spirit is a dream:  
If all are the Spirit, Matter is a lie,  
And who was the liar who forged the universe?  
The Real with the unreal cannot mate.  
He who would turn to God, must leave the world;  
He who would live in the Spirit, must give up life;  
He who has met the Self, renounces self....  
Two only are the doors of man's escape,  
Death of his body Matter's gate to peace,  
Death of his soul his last felicity.<sup>10</sup>

The horror of passing through the door of soul's death to felicity is for Savitri no less terrifying than that of crossing the gate of peace by killing the body. In fact, logically speaking, this negative aspect cannot make Spirit and Matter self-exclusive; if they cannot be directly reconciled, it does not mean that they can cancel each other. Spirit or Matter is a wrong starting-point. True, in the evolutionary process what is prominently seen is the latter; but the former is the substratum and the crown of the entire unfoldment, the essence of things. Matter evolved in Spirit gives to it a substantiality which otherwise it lacks in the earthly manifestation at present. Spirit densified in the form of Matter brings to physicality God-splendour and God-might. The Ether of infinite Ecstasy acquires a luminous fixity that is at once supple and many-forming in its embodiment of the Truth-consciousness. In the triumph of Love over Death this divine miracle shall be accomplished. Savitri in her revelation reaches a high point, to even proclaim that

The great stars burn with my unceasing fire  
 And life and death are both its fuel made.  
 Life only was my blind attempt to love:  
 Earth saw my struggle, heaven my victory;  
 All shall be seized, transcended; there shall kiss  
 Casting their veils before the marriage fire  
 The eternal bridegroom and eternal bride.  
 The heavens accept our broken flights at last.  
 On our life's prow that breaks the waves of Time  
 No signal light of hope has gleamed in vain.<sup>11</sup>

In that revelation Death shudders helplessly with a secret ecstasy. The twilight through which they were moving also trembles as if to break its own haunting magic's spell.

*(To be continued)*

R. Y. DESHPANDE

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2. *Savitri*, p. 590.
3. *Savitri*, pp. 612-613.
4. *Savitri*, p. 617.
5. *Savitri*, pp. 623-624.
6. *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 340, IX 83 5
7. *Ibid*, p 540, IX. 75.1
8. *Savitri*, p 630.
9. *Savitri*, p. 637.
10. *Savitri*, p. 635.
11. *Savitri*. p. 638

# NOLINI KANTA GUPTA BIRTH CENTENARY

## Compiler's Note

Nolini-da, free from the passions and prevarications of the present, could calmly review a problem in the perspective of what had been and what might be expected. Each problem of existence is a step on the forward march of civilization; seen thus it loses its pain and poignancy and a narrow path may be seen threading through the future.

The most vexed problem facing India, the division of the Indian people into Hindus and Muslims, has defied solution and is becoming ossified. Here in the second part of an article of brilliant originality Nolini-da has laid bare the very core of the festering wound and not only discussed the cause but also pointed out the remedy. In the present context when the problem seems intractable this article may bring a true understanding and a ray of hope.

SHYAM KUMARI

## THE BASIS OF UNITY

India's historical development is marked by a special characteristic which is at once the expression of her inmost nature and the setting of a problem which she has to solve for herself and for the whole human race. I have spoken of the diversity and divergence of affiliations in a modern social unit. But what distinguishes India from all other peoples is that the diversity and divergence have culminated here in contradictoriness and mutual exclusion.

The first extremes that met in India and fought and gradually coalesced to form a single cultural and social whole were, as is well known, the Aryan and the non-Aryan. Indeed, the geologists tell us, the land itself is divided into two parts structurally quite different and distinct, the Deccan plateau and the Himalayan ranges with the Indo-Gangetic plain: the former is formed out of the most ancient and stable and, on the whole, horizontally bedded rocks of the earth, while the latter is of comparatively recent origin, formed out of a more flexible and weaker belt (the Himalayan region consisting of a colossal flexing and crumpling of strata). The disparity is so much that a certain group of geologists hold that the Deccan plateau did not at all form part of the Asiatic continent, but had drifted and dashed into it: in fact the Himalayas are the result of this mighty impact. The usual division of an Aryan and a Dravidian race may be due to a memory of the clash of the two continents and their races.

However, coming to historical times, we see wave after wave of the most heterogeneous and disparate elements—Sakas and Huns and Greeks, each bringing its quota of exotic material—enter into the oceanic Indian life and culture, lose their separate foreign identity and become part and parcel of the

common whole. Even so, a single unitary body was formed out of such varied and shifting materials—not in the political, but in a socio-religious sense. For a catholic religious spirit, not being solely doctrinal and personal, admitted and embraced in its supple and wide texture almost an infinite variety of approaches to the Divine, of forms and norms of apprehending the Beyond. It has been called Hinduism: it is a vast synthesis of multiple affiliations. It expresses the characteristic genius of India and hence Hinduism and Indianism came to be looked upon as synonymous terms. And the same could be defined also as Vedic religion and culture, for its invariable basis—the bed-rock on which it stood firm and erect—was the Vedas, the Knowledge seen by the sages. But there had already risen a voice of dissidence and discord—that of Buddha, not so much, perhaps, of Buddha as of Buddhism. The Buddhistic enlightenment and discipline did not admit the supreme authority of the Vedas; it sought other bases of truth and reality. It was a great denial; and it meant and worked for a vital schism. The denial of the Vedas by itself, perhaps, would not be serious, but it became so, as it was symptomatic of a deeper divergence. Denying the Vedas, the Buddhistic spirit denied life. It was quite a new thing in the Indian consciousness and spiritual discipline. And it left such a stamp there that even today it stands as the dominant character of the Indian outlook. However, India's synthetic genius rose to the occasion and knew how to bridge the chasm, close up the fissure, and present again a body whole and entire. Buddha became one of the Avatars: the discipline of Nirvana and Maya was reserved as the last duty to be performed at the end of life, as the culmination of a full-length span of action and achievement; the way to Moksha lay through Dharma and Artha and Kama, Sannyasa had to be built upon Brahmacharya and Garhasthya. The integral ideal was epitomized by Kalidasa in his famous lines about the character of the Raghus:

They devoted themselves to study in their boyhood, in youth they pursued the objects of life; when old they took to spiritual austerities, and in the end they died united with the higher consciousness.

Only this process of integration was not done in a day, it took some centuries and had to pass through some unpleasant intermediary stages.

And still this was not the last—it could not be the last—antithesis that had to be synthetized. The dialectical movement led to a more serious and fiercer contradiction. The Buddhistic schism was after all a division brought about from within: it could be said that the two terms of the antinomy belonged to the same genus and were commensurable. The idea or experience of Asat and Maya was not unknown to the Upanishads, only it had not there the exclusive stress which the later developments gave it. Hence quite a different, an altogether foreign body was imported into what was or had come to be a homogeneous entity, and in a considerable mass. Unlike the previous irruptions that merged

and were lost in the general life and consciousness, Islam entered as a leaven that maintained its integrity and revolutionized Indian life and culture by infusing into its tone a Semitic accent. After the Islamic impact India could not be what she was before—a change became inevitable even in the major note. It was a psychological cataclysm almost on a par with the geological one that formed her body; but the spirit behind which created the body was working automatically, inexorably towards the greater and more difficult synthesis demanded by the situation. Only the thing is to be done now consciously, not through an unconscious process of *laissez-faire* as on the inferior stages of evolution in the past. And that is the true genesis of the present conflict.

History abounds in instances of racial and cultural immixture. Indeed, all major human groupings of today are invariably composite formations. Excepting, perhaps, some primitive aboriginal tribes there are no pure races existent. The Briton, the Dane, the Anglo-Saxon, and the Norman have combined to form the British; a Frenchman has a Gaul, a Roman, a Frank in him; and a Spaniard's blood would show an Iberian, a Latin, a Gothic, a Moorish element in it. And much more than a people, a culture in modern times has been a veritable cockpit of multifarious and even incongruous elements. There are instances also in which a perfect fusion could not be accomplished, and one element had to be rejected or crushed out. The complete disappearance of the Aztecs and Mayas in South America, the decadence of the Red Indians in North America, of the Negroes in Africa as a result of a fierce clash with European peoples and European culture illustrate the point.

Nature, on the whole, has solved the problem of blood fusion and mental fusion of different peoples, although on a smaller scale. India today presents the problem on a larger scale and on a higher or deeper level. The demand is for a spiritual fusion and unity. Strange to say, although the Spirit is the true bedrock of unity—since, at bottom, it means identity—it is on this plane that mankind has not yet been able to really meet and coalesce. India's genius has been precisely working in the line of a perfect solution of this supreme problem.

Islam comes with a full-fledged spiritual soul and a mental and vital formation commensurable with that inner being and consciousness. It comes with a dynamic spirit, a warrior mood, that aims at conquering the physical world for the Lord, a temperament which Indian spirituality had not, or had lost long before, if she had anything of it. This was, perhaps, what Vivekananda meant when he spoke graphically of a Hindu soul with a Muslim body. The Islamic dispensation, however, brings with it not only something complementary, but also something contradictory, if not for anything else, at least for the strong individuality which does not easily yield to assimilation. Still, in spite of great odds, the process of assimilation was going on slowly and surely. But of late it appears to have come to a dead halt; difficulties have been presented which seem insuperable.

If religious toleration were enough, if that made up man's highest and lar-

gest achievement, then Nature need not have attempted to go beyond cultural fusion; a liberal culture is the surest basis for a catholic religious spirit. But such a spirit of toleration and catholicity, although it bespeaks a widened consciousness, does not always enshrine a profundity of being. Nobody is more tolerant and catholic than a dilettante, but an ardent spiritual soul is different.

To be loyal to one's line of self-fulfilment, to follow one's self-law, *svadharmā*, wholly and absolutely—without this no spiritual life is possible—and yet not to come into clash with other lines and loyalties, nay more, to be in positive harmony with them, is a problem which has not been really solved. It was solved, perhaps, in the consciousness of a Ramakrishna, a few individuals here and there, but it has always remained a source of conflict and disharmony in the general mind even in the field of spirituality. The clash of spiritual or religious loyalties has taken such an acute form in India today, they have been carried to the bitter extreme, in order, we venture to say, that the final synthesis might be absolute and irrevocable. This is India's mission to work out, and this is the lesson which she brings to the world.

The solution can come, first, by going to the true religion of the Spirit, by being truly spiritual and not merely religious, for, as we have said, real unity lies only in and through the Spirit, since Spirit is one and indivisible; secondly, by bringing down something — a great part, indeed, if not the whole—of this puissant and marvellous Spirit into our life of emotions and sensations and activities.

If it is said that this is an ideal for the few only, not for the mass, our answer to that is the answer of the Gita—*Yad yad acharati sreshthah*. Let the few then practise and achieve the ideal: the mass will have to follow as far as it is possible and necessary. It is the very character of the evolutionary system of Nature, as expressed in the principle of symbiosis, that any considerable change in one place (in one species) is accompanied by a corresponding change in the same direction in other contiguous places (in other associated species) in order that the poise and balance of the system may be maintained.

It is precisely strong nuclei that are needed (even, perhaps, one strong nucleus is sufficient) where the single and integrated spiritual consciousness is an accomplished and established fact: that acts inevitably as a solvent drawing in and assimilating or transforming and re-creating as much of the surroundings as its own degree and nature of achievement inevitably demand.

India did not and could not stop at mere cultural fusion—which was a supreme gift of the Moguls. She did not and could not stop at another momentous cultural fusion brought about by the European impact. She aimed at something more. Nature demanded of her that she should discover a greater secret of human unity and through progressive experiments apply and establish it in fact. Christianity did not raise this problem of the greater synthesis, for the Christian peoples were more culture-minded than religious-minded. It was left for an Asiatic people to set the problem and for India to work out the solution.



## SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

*(Continued from the issue of 24 November 1988)*

IN the previous articles we have discussed Sri Aurobindo's critical analysis of Buddha's message of freedom, love and compassion and how it covered every sphere of life, and led to an outflowing of cultural activity during that period. Literature, art and other forms of beauty and delight not only flourished in India but also brimmed over to distant lands and peoples. The message of universal love and compassion touched the souls of China, Japan, and Ceylon, the far East as well as the Middle East.

Sri Aurobindo interprets Buddhism in a new light which bears out the inner truth of that religion. He tells us: "Buddhism was not solely a cloudy sublimation of Nirvana, nothingness, extinction and the tyrannous futility of Karma; it gave us a great and powerful discipline for the life of man on earth. The enormous positive effects it had on society and ethics and the creative impulse it imparted to art and thought and in a less degree to literature, are a sufficient proof of the strong vitality of its method. If this positive turn was present in the most extreme philosophy of denial, it was still more largely present in the totality of Indian culture."<sup>1</sup>

During the Gupta period when the teaching of Buddhism was in full swing, the sculptors were cutting into rugged and steep mountains and cliffs and building magnificent cavern cathedrals and monasteries. They erected Bodhisattvas and engraved the figures of Buddha and various gods and goddesses. They decorated walls and ceilings with paintings bearing a mystic touch.

This Buddhist efflorescence is particularly marked in the Ajanta caves. Sri Aurobindo's remarks about Ajanta's art run: "...the peculiar appeal of the art of Ajanta springs from the remarkably inward, spiritual and psychic turn which was given to the artistic conception and method by the pervading genius of Indian culture. Indian painting no more than Indian architecture and sculpture could escape from its absorbing motive, its transmuting atmosphere, the direct or subtle obsession of the mind that has been subtly and strangely changed, the eye that has been trained to see, not as others with only the external eye but by a constant communing of the mental parts and the inner vision with the self beyond mind and the spirit to which forms are only a transparent veil or a slight index of its own greater splendour."<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Sisirkumar Mitra says: "There are scholars who believe that Buddhism was a new stir of India's soul promoting cultural movements that had their rise and growth in the period characterised by some scholars as a continuation of the previous age of the Dharma. When Asoka, the great Mauryan emperor and the first internationalist in history, sent missionaries to various parts of his empire and to countries beyond for the inner regeneration of man, he was inspired by

the spiritual ideal of his race. Was it not the same ideal again that moved him to declare: 'conquest by Dharma is higher than conquest by sword,' 'concord alone is meritorious', 'all men are my children'? No wonder he made it his life's mission to share the spiritual treasures of his country with others far and near."<sup>3</sup>

Sweeping changes were made in the religious, social and cultural outlook and in institutions of each successive age. But the vitality of the central ideas and fundamental values was never lost so as to bring complete disintegration.

"When we look at the past of India," says Sri Aurobindo, "what strikes us...is her stupendous vitality, her inexhaustible power of life and joy of life, her almost unimaginably prolific creativeness. For three thousand years at least,—it is indeed much longer,—she has been creating abundantly and incessantly, lavishly, with an inexhaustible many-sidedness, republics and kingdoms and empires, philosophies and cosmogonies and sciences and creeds and arts and poems and all kinds of monuments, palaces and temples and public works, communities and societies and religious orders, laws and codes and rituals, physical sciences, psychic sciences, systems of Yoga and systems of politics and administration, arts spiritual, arts worldly, trades, industries, fine crafts,—the list is endless and in each item there is almost a plethora of activity. She creates and creates and is not satisfied and is not tired; she will not have an end of it, seems hardly to need a space for rest, a time for inertia and lying fallow. She expands too outside her borders; her ships cross the ocean and the fine superfluity of her wealth brims over to Judea and Egypt and Rome; her colonies spread her arts and epics and creeds in the Archipelago; her traces are found in the sands of Mesopotamia; her religions conquer China and Japan and spread westward as far as Palestine and Alexandria, and the figures of the Upanishads and the sayings of the Buddhists are reechoed on the lips of Christ. Everywhere, as on her soil, so in her works there is the teeming of a superabundant energy of life."<sup>4</sup>

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

#### REFERENCES

1. *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 14, pp. 179-80.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 244.
3. *Resurgent India*, by Sisir Kumar Mitra, pp. 18, 19.
4. *The Renaissance in India*, pp. 7, 8.

# FRENCH SYMBOLIST AESTHETICS AND SRI AUROBINDO'S POETICS

## AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

In the field of poetics Sri Aurobindo's critical theories have received little attention. Being a seer-poet, mystic and prophet, he developed poetic theories and canons of literary criticism in his own way. His poetics forms a necessary prelude to the future poetic activity of man. S. K. Prasad, a critic and devotee, reasonably evaluates the worth of Aurobindonian theories:

That there is a magnificent and spiritually uplifting vision in store for modern man, calculated to transform the very cultural level of his living and the ethos of civilisation so far built up by him, is, however, unmistakable, and made superbly clear by him in... *The Future Poetry*.<sup>1</sup>

A detailed discussion of all of Sri Aurobindo's poetic theories is beyond the scope of this paper. I have to limit myself to trace the lines of similar approaches made by the French Symbolist poets and Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo assigns a prominent place to poetic inspiration. He thinks that the most genuine and perfect poetry comes always from some subtle plane through the creative vital, and uses the outer mind and other external instruments for transmission. The place of inspiration in Symbolist poetry is not altogether ruled out. Commenting on Paul Valéry's confession that God sometimes inspired him to write, John Press remarks:

We need not pause to enquire exactly what Valéry meant when he attributed his inspiration to God: it is enough for us to note that he acknowledged the existence of an external source of power and illumination from which he received a gift that he had not deliberately sought.<sup>2</sup>

The highest achievement of poetry for Sri Aurobindo is "the *Mantra* of the Real". Poetry is *Mantra* because it voices the inmost truth; it is the rhythmic utterance of the soul. What is *Mantra* then? While explaining the meaning of it, Sri Aurobindo says, "*Mantra* is not in its substance or form poetic enunciation of a philosophic truth, but the rhythmic revelation or intuition arising out of the soul's sight of God and Nature and the world and the inner truth—occult to the outward eye—of all that peoples it, the secrets of their life and being."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. K. Prasad, *The Literary Criticism of Sri Aurobindo* (Patna: Bharati Bhavan, 1974), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> John Press, *The Fire and Fountain* (Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry and Letters on Poetry, Literature and Art* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), p. 34

*Mantra* is never a product of the human mind; it comes from the "Overhead" inspiration. It says infinitely more than the sense-mind can understand, or the mere words seem to indicate. It is something mystical and so eludes interpretation on the mental plane. Its range and subjects are unlimited. The poets of the *Mantra* penetrate to the soul and essence of things and, by images and words, reveal their inmost reality. The process is a very complex and subtle one which keeps the whole being of the poet as well as of the receiver engaged. Though a *Mantra* is received in the form of words, yet it is more than these compact words can convey. The truth which we get from the *Mantra* is not merely local or particular but a force or form of the Supreme Reality. The *Mantra* is born out of the soul's sight and in the visionary process the identity of the seer is lost. What happens in the process of poetic creation is clearly described by Sri Aurobindo in the following way:

... the personality of the seer is lost in the eternity of the vision, and the Spirit of all seems alone to be there speaking sovereignly its own secrets.<sup>1</sup>

This picture of the disappearance of the poet's personality is part of a deep poetic theory on which V. K. Gokak makes very valuable remarks:

This disappearance of the seer in his vision is more significant than the negative capability, the annihilation of the poet's identity which Keats describes in one of his letters or the "depersonalization" that T. S. Eliot speaks of. The Spirit, of which Sri Aurobindo writes, is a shining reality, not merely a figure of speech like Nature who, says Arnold, takes the pen from Wordsworth's hand in his most moving passages and seems to write herself.<sup>2</sup>

As we ascend beyond mind, higher and wider values replace the values of our limited mind, life and bodily consciousness. So also when a poet ascends to a supreme level of consciousness, he achieves cosmic consciousness. The cosmic consciousness in a poet enables him to possess the experience of a universal beauty, universal love, and universal delight. At the Overmind level a poet sees a universal beauty touching, uplifting all things, moulding them as objects of divine aesthesis. Every form becomes beautiful to him in a profounder and larger sense of beauty. The poet sees the face of the Divine everywhere. In an integral experience he sees all things as if made of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss.

Poetry is a form of aesthetic contemplation. In this aesthetic contemplation a deeper meaning is conveyed through a certain quality or power in the language and the rhythm which a poet uses in Overhead poetry. At the top

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 35

<sup>2</sup> V. K. Gokak, *Sri Aurobindo: Seer and Poet* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1973), p. 110.

pitch of the Overhead poetic language one comes across an inspired selection or an unusual bringing together of words which has the power to force a deeper sense on the mind of the reader. Sri Aurobindo has very categorically stated the use of a special language in Overmind poetry in the following passage:

On an inferior level Overmind may use the language of the intellect to convey as far as that language can do it its own greater meaning and message but on its summits Overmind uses its own native language and gives to its truths their own supreme utterance, and no intellectual speech, no mentalised poetry can equal or even come near to that power and beauty ... For... truth itself is highest poetry and has only to appear to be utterly beautiful to the vision, the hearing, the sensibility of the soul. There dwells and from there springs the mystery of the inevitable word, the supreme immortal rhythm, the absolute significance and the absolute utterance.<sup>1</sup>

Symbolism is to be studied from two angles: one is called the personal aspect that remains on the human level; and the other is known as "transcendental Symbolism" in which concrete images are used as symbols of a vast and general world of which our real world is merely an imperfect representation. Baudelaire goes to the extent of saying that in a perfect poem the reader feels himself exiled in an imperfect world. The purpose of poetry is to create for the reader a new reality out of this world of reality. The Symbolist poets as well as Sri Aurobindo emphasise the creation or expression of a new Reality which is different from the world in which we live. Moreover, Baudelaire and others elevated the poet to the rank of priest or prophet because of the poet's capacity of creating a new reality. Rimbaud calls a poet "le poète voyant", "the poet seer". The capacity of a poet to create supereality inspires Baudelaire to make an epoch-making pronouncement: "It is through and by means of poetry that the soul perceives the splendours lying beyond the grave."<sup>2</sup>

A poet's ability to create a second reality makes him a divine figure who sees through the wall of the present reality to the paradise beyond. It is through the medium of poetry that a poet escapes from mundane reality to a land of order, beauty, calm, bliss, harmony and perfection. It is definitely a Sidneyian view of the creation of a better (golden) world by a poet.

Sri Aurobindo has found a peculiarity in the life of a poet:

"The poet has in him a double personality, a double instrument of his response to life and existence. There is in him the normal man absorbed in mere living who thinks and feels and acts like others, and there is the seer of things, the super-normal man, the super-soul or delight-soul in touch with

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), rpt. 1977, p. 813.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Chadwick, *Symbolism* (London: Methuen and Company Ltd., 1971) p. 3.

the impersonal and eternal fountains of joy and beauty who creates from the source and transmutes by its alchemy all experience into a form of the spirit's Ananda.<sup>1</sup>

The poet is in a sense the spokesman of the eternal spirit of beauty and delight and shares the highest creative and self-expressive rapture which is close to the divine ecstasy, Ananda. This state of rapture is called by Plato a divine frenzy. Ananda is born not of mental but of soul-experience. Both Baudelaire and Rimbaud consider a poet a seer, a visionary. To Baudelaire a poet brings a correspondence between the inner and the outer reality, between the subjective and the objective. In speaking of Baudelaire's conception of a poet Anna Balakian writes:

Baudelaire goes to generalise that the poet, in the broad definition of the word, is a translator, a decipherer of the divine hieroglyphics. He also accepts the literal correspondence between the divine and natural worlds.<sup>2</sup>

Thus Sri Aurobindo and the French Symbolist poets put more emphasis on the inner vision of a poet to create correspondence between the world of the spirit and the natural world in which we live. Sri Aurobindo goes a step ahead and categorises the inner vision of a poet more accurately and analyses it psychologically. He says:

...the originating source of poetry may be anywhere and poetry may arise or descend from the subtle-physical plane, from the higher or lower vital..., from the dynamic or creative intelligence, from the plane of dynamic vision, from the psychic, from the illumined mind or Intuition,—even, though this is the rarest, from the Overmind wideness.<sup>3</sup>

In such a process of poetic creation the poet is only a receptacle, a mere channel although he feels the joy of creation.

Of course Edgar Allan Poe had declared that the artist's intuition could lead to the most subtle region of the human mind which hitherto had been demonstrated only by Mathematics. Poe's view would be that the world has yet fully to investigate the highest possibilities of the poetic consciousness. He further suggested that "abstract poetry" might even be composed on mathematical foundations. To be able to compose such poetry it is necessary that one should raise one's consciousness to the highest level possible to govern one's intuitive awareness. For

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry*, p. 241.

<sup>2</sup> Anna Balakian *The Symbolist Movement: A Critical Appraisal* (New York: New York University Press, 1977), p. xi.

<sup>3</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry*, p. 291.

Sri Aurobindo one can evidently raise one's consciousness through *yoga sādhanā* (spiritual discipline). On the question of heightening one's consciousness Valéry speaks like a *Yogi* (a disciplined man) when he says that a man who measures himself against himself and remakes himself according to his lights has a superior achievement. The first effort of humanity, according to Valéry, is that of changing its disorder into order, and chance into power. To study the consciousness of oneself, for oneself, and through the power of organised thought to create a new self in a second consciousness was Valéry's major preoccupation. His efforts in this direction led him to the conception of universal transformation of all human activities in the domain of thought and art. Valéry's analytical mind was evidently in search of a research work of drastic order to carry poetry further into an abstract world of its own. It was the quest for a higher consciousness, a greater knowledge of "Self" that entirely occupied his thought.

Sri Aurobindo's *yoga* of "triple transformation", a process of concerted *yogic sādhanā* is a definitive answer to Valéry's life-long search for higher consciousness. The aim of *yoga* is to perfect one's life, to know one's true self, the inner self. It is through *Yoga* that one can heighten and make deeper one's consciousness. Human limitations can be transcended through *yoga*. Valéry's conception, too, is that in order to reach a universal understanding, we must inevitably first *know ourselves*. He thinks that mind realises for itself a state of intellectual vision, an Absolute Self conceivable without relation to other things. He tried to extend his own consciousness so as to acquire greater power of creation. His conception of the Absolute Self is the basis of his idea of a super-consciousness capable of passing from the sphere of phenomena to the sphere of noumena as the object of meditation. His professed aim in poetry, as pointed out by Agnes Ethel Mackay, was the expression of an Absolute Self. For heightening one's consciousness and to acquire poetic force Sri Aurobindo prescribes *yogic sādhanā* in one's life. Valéry too tried a sort of *sādhanā*: he observed some years of poetic silence; and during this period he constructed his intellectual universe. He reached a state of detachment in which consciousness of Self, liberated from all ordinary preoccupation, learned to refuse to be "anything whatsoever". This state is described by Agnes Ethel Mackay as "a condition of intellectual beatitude, a potential condition of awareness", but it is also "a clarity that excludes any mystical revelation."<sup>1</sup>

René Welleck has rightly analysed the spiritual aspect of Baudelaire's "philosophy of composition". He says:

Baudelaire actually sought and at times captured certain almost supernatural states of the soul (in which) the profundity of life reveals itself completely, in any spectacle, however ordinary it may be, upon which one gazes...

<sup>1</sup> Agnes Ethel Mackay, *The Universal Self. A Study of Paul Valéry* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 118.

There is, in Baudelaire, at least an inspiration toward mysticism, a belief that art, at its highest, is vision, ecstasy, and thus inspiration...<sup>1</sup>

For Valéry to construct a poem means to construct oneself. The poetic art has as its counterpart an art of self-fulfilment by means of the acts which beget the poem; an art of overcoming the disorder of psychological life. Most of the Symbolist poets focussed their attention on the self for purification and perfection in life, even if it be negative perfection. Marcel Raymond in his scholarly analysis of the French Symbolist Movement gives more stress on the spiritual aspect of Symbolist poetry:

To take refuge in oneself, to turn one's eye to oneself, in order to satisfy a desire for purity and negative perfection, or from fear, or weariness, or disgust with existence, but most often from an erotic desire to espouse all the inner strings of the self—such was the attitude *par excellence* of ultramodern symbolism."<sup>2</sup>

It is clear that the main thrust in the poetry of the Symbolists was towards spirituality. The "decadent spirit" that found entry into the poetry of the Symbolists is due mainly to their lack of proper grip on spirituality. In the poetry of Sri Aurobindo no such negative trend is traceable because he had a strong base in spirituality and had acquired in his personal life mystic and *nirvanic* experiences. Whenever he defines either poetry or a poet the stress is invariably on the "soul", which is defined for poetic purposes as the subtle inner intuitive being on every plane. "A soul expressing the eternal Truth and Beauty through some of the infinite variations of beauty, with the word for its instrument, that is, after all, what the poet is, and it is to a similar soul in us seeking the same spirit and responding to it that he makes his appeal."<sup>3</sup> Sri Aurobindo says that the true creator, the true bearer of poetic delight is the soul. The poet in the Aurobindonian canon is no less than a spiritual being, a revealer of divine truth. A great poet exceeds the limits of imagination and intelligence and his vital senses to establish contact with his own soul. Only then will he be able to interpret the highest and noblest thoughts, "the eternal spirit of Truth and Beauty" in their enduring forms. In the opinion of Sri Aurobindo both the poet and the reader undergo a spiritual interiorisation in creating and appreciating poetry. What is demanded of a poet, a critic and a reader is the awakening of one's soul.

The Symbolist poets of France do put stress on the importance of the soul

<sup>1</sup> René Welleck, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1756-1920* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966), p. 437.

<sup>2</sup> Marcel Raymond, *From Baudelaire to Surrealism* (New York: Wittenborn & Schultz, Inc., 1950), pp. 57-8.

<sup>3</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry*, p. 12.



of man. As pointed out by Raymond the obscurity in the poetry of the Symbolist poets is due to its mysterious quality—a quality inherent in its dealing with the soul of man:

Its essential obscurity is due to the fact that it is the history of a soul and it seeks to comply with the mystery of that soul; but this obscurity is luminous...<sup>1</sup>

Sri Aurobindo and the Symbolist poets of France in their great vision make the prophecy of the dawning of an age of the poetry of the spirit replacing that of the poetry of the flesh. The more a poet turns inward the more the vast realm of spirit unfolds before him with infinite variety. In this direction long back the Victorian poet and critic, Matthew Arnold, made a profound remark: “genuine poetry is conceived and composed in the soul.” Probably the time is not very far off for a fuller understanding of this statement to which Sri Aurobindo has given the greatest body of detailed significance.

DR. NANDA KISHORE MISHRA

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Raymond, *From Baudelaire to Surrealism*, p. 111.

## PEARLS IN MY POND

LET shells grow in my garden pond,  
Let perfect pearls be born in their wombs.  
O Thy seas are too deep  
And their treasures they keep.  
I can't fathom their recesses,  
But if pearls could form in my pond  
I'll make rich every beggar  
And decorate each broken doll.

The sky is too far  
And the night too dark.  
Let the stars descend to my terrace—  
I'll make fairy wands  
And bless all things on earth—  
Men, animals, trees and plants.

SHYAM KUMARI

### Author's Note

In my childhood I used to fantasise about finding pure invaluable pearls in our neighbourhood pond. With the passage of time this fancy faded from my conscious mind.

On 9th November 1987, as if out of the blue, I wrote the above poem. And at once came the remembrance of my childhood fantasy.

Then it happened. In May-June 1988 Partho Das of the Vidyasagar Colony of South Calcutta found a pure pearl in an oyster taken from a pond of the colony. In 1986 this pond had been deepened with a view to fish-culture. And on the advice of experts about a hundred oyster shells had been planted for the fishes to feed upon. As the news of Partho Das's pearl spread, a rush was on and many became rich.

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**A Tale of Two Princes** by *Bina Saksena* (Writers' Workshop, Calcutta), Price: Rs. 80.00

I ALMOST never read books these days and find it even more difficult to read typescripts or manuscripts than the printed word. But being a writer myself, I never refuse to look at a fellow writer's work, whatever stage or condition it's in.

Bina Saksena's typescript of *A Tale of Two Princes* was neat enough, with a few corrections and a few additions. But it would have had to be well nigh illegible for me to put it down.

The theme relates to twin brothers, basically one individuality split into two. But it is their unity which forms the basis of the story; despite their separation from each other from the age of twelve, they maintain an inner contact. Their outer lives, however, follow widely divergent paths. The eldest brother follows a great rishi, Shukratma, to his hermitage and becomes a sadhak there. The second succeeds his father as the king of Vimalapuram. His country has been at war with a primitive tribe of forest dwellers. Finally peace is concluded and one of the clauses of the peace treaty is that the young King Chandraketu marry the tribal princess, Katankata. The marriage proves to be a disaster, due to the princess's continuing hostility towards the people of her husband and her husband himself.

Enter the Princess Mandakini. She is something more than human—but only Shukratma knows her true identity. Mandakini becomes Chandraketu's second wife, and rescues her co-wife, Katankata, from the agony of suspicion and hatred in which she lives. This is the sort of release which only divine love can effect. Mandakini is an embodiment of this and, as we know, when a higher manifestation of love incarnates, it inevitably attracts the hostility of the dark forces of resistance to progress. The obstacle to harmony is often crude suspicion, in this case represented by Katankata's father.

Katankata herself stands for the portion of him that has found release. This provokes the darkness in him to a treachery which might otherwise have remained dormant. The treaty goes for nought. His being fastens on the most retrograde element in the palace, his daughter's servant who continues worshipping the Rakshasa—her tribe's highest divinity.

Both town and palace are put to the torch. Mandakini is killed, but her son by the King and the King himself escape to the hermitage where his brother, with telepathic knowledge of his coming, awaits him. But without Mandakini, the King's life is meaningless to him.

And here it is that Bina Saksena's understanding of the forces that transform darkness becomes evident. The play has to be read to savour the exquisite balance and juxtaposition of all these forces. The theme is apparently simple, like

all legends. It has that seeming simplicity that reveals profundities. The legend quality of a not-quite-real world that you find in *The Tempest* and *A Winter's Tale* pervades the play. It has also some of the magic of Tagore's *Red Oleander*.

Shukratma, the rishi, knows that the sojourn in the hermitage is but a respite and, as all true sages must, he lifts the darkness by releasing the King from his death wish. An inaccessible hermitage is no place for a king to work out his destiny. He must return to restore order in the kingdom. But for this he needs his wholeness. And his twin, his wisdom, who loves to dwell in hermitages, must make the sacrifice and go with him.

The child, the future, is left behind to be reared, for the prophecy states that "...When full grown, he, like a black-maned lion, shall take his charge, while his twin fathers shall retire to prayer and blessed meditation."

And the story of the child is to be found in Bina Saksena's forthcoming book, *Agnibhrata*.

One comes to the end of the play with the sense of having come to grips with the fundamental issues of life, and one closes the book with the satisfying conviction that though darkness can prevail and does destroy, wisdom lies hidden in the heart of things, which if pursued with courage, will spread the light again.

This is a marvellous little play, a gem. It seems to have descended ready-made from some other plane where all good creators can come and go.

MAGGI LIDCHI-GRASSI

## TWO REVIEWS FROM AN ENGLISH PEN

### 1

**Vers L'Avenir**; issue of August 1988; Pondicherry, SAICE

*Vers L'Avenir* is the name given by the Mother in 1967 for the 'school magazine' of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. It is written, illustrated, edited and produced by students of the school, and contains stories, poems, puzzles, interviews and articles, some in English, some in French. In this issue, the contributors range in age from 11 to 21. I found especially interesting the two interviews conducted and reported by students: one with our editor, K. D. Sethna, and one with the renowned magician P. C. Sarkar who was in Pondicherry this year. The first instalment of a story by Himanshu Mistry shows originality of imagination and the capacity for detailed observation that can make writing vivid and convincing, but as in the case of almost all the other contributions, there is room for improvement in the accuracy and fluency of the language used. The author of 'To err is human...' has taken upon himself the

task of advising his fellows about mistakes to be avoided in French and English; this reviewer cannot resist pointing out that, in English, mistakes are not 'done' but 'made'... and that to this English ear at least, 'He gave a speech' sounds perfectly acceptable.

By the time this review meets the public eye, a new issue of *Vers L'Avenir* may be expected. I look forward to seeing contributions from even younger writers... seven- and eight-year olds often have wonderfully original material to offer. And since the editors, in their interesting introductory 'Brief History' of the magazine, seem to welcome the idea of innovations, may I, as an ex-editor of a school magazine, suggest that there could be a 'Former Students' section, in which each time one past member of the school could be asked to share his post-school experiences and insights with the younger generation following on behind?

In any case, we extend our congratulations and encouragement to those who have taken up all the hard work of continuing this worthy venture.

2

**Miraculous Grace of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo**, by *Kripabhikshu Anil Mohan*, translated by B. K. Palit, privately published, Rs. 40.00. Available at SABDA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002.

This is an unusually interesting tale in the *genre*, 'How they came to the Ashram'; long after the book has been laid down, incidents from it linger in the mind and resonate there with increasing significance. One of the lessons it impresses on us with peculiar forcefulness is, 'Never judge by appearances'—for, on arriving at his goal after a pilgrimage of great hardship, Kripavikshu Anil Mohan was simply driven away again by a person who found that he did not look sufficiently respectable; the reader who has followed him on his long journey is likely to find this moment unforgettably poignant.

The moral might be applied to the book itself; for its outer appearance, its 'clothing' as it were, is not very attractive: the design of the cover, the style of the illustrations, the quality of the paper and the typeface will not appeal to a refined taste. (It should be noted, however, that the printing by Navajyoti Press seems to have been done with exemplary care, and misprints are very rare—all the more pity that there should be a glaring one on the very first page, in the 'Dedication'.) And although one gathers that the author originally wrote in literate and even elegant Bengali, the translation into English, especially in the crucial early pages, can hardly be described as lucid. But it is worth going beyond these initial discouragements. Kripavikshu's tale is astonishing, informative, and in places deeply moving. I would not like to give any further hint about the events within it, for that would risk spoiling the suspense of what is

truly an adventure story. As a saga of spiritual search, of obstacles, ordeals and pitfalls on the way, and of truly miraculous Grace, it is both thrilling and memorable—and, as I said at the beginning, leaves valuable impressions reverberating in the consciousness long after the reading is over.

A.M.S.

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## THE TRAITOR

HE had never heard  
such music before—  
a music so enthralling and sweet.  
What power in those clinking discs!

Dreaming of his good fortune  
he strode. Cheerfully they jingled  
as the wallet at his belt  
swayed with each step.

What use!... What use  
should he make of them?  
Those thirty pieces of winking silver  
must be a Heaven's worth.

Should he buy  
the honeyed lips of a harlot  
or the century-old casks of wine  
to wash his lips of sin?

His head was thronged with ideas.  
His heart, like an army in rout,  
raced in blinding darkness.  
At the tunnel's end he saw Light.

He found solace in a piece of rope.  
The all-powerful discs laughed  
with their eyes at the heavy heart  
of the dangling Judas Iscariot.

P. RAJA

# *Students' Section*

## **THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION**

**Twenty-fifth Annual Conference**

**14 August 1988**

**SCIENCE AND YOGA**

**Speech by Jayant Bhattacharya**

MORE than sixty years ago, a revolution occurred in the world of physical sciences. Bizarre and stunning new ideas about space and time, mind and matter, erupted among the scientific community. Concepts that have intrigued and inspired the greatest scientific intellects of the last two generations have at last begun to percolate down to the general public which had never suspected the magnitude of the revolution that shook human thought.

In the first quarter of this century two momentous theories were proposed: the theory of relativity and the quantum theory. It is impossible to appreciate the tremendous import of these two theories unless one is well acquainted with the furthest reaches of contemporary physics, but let it suffice for now to say that most of twentieth-century physics is founded on these two theories.

Physics that has the theory of relativity and the quantum theory as a basis did much more than simply provide a better model of the physical world. Physicists the world over began to realise that the new physics made a radical reformulation of the most fundamental concepts of reality imperative. They had to perforce make an approach to their research that was novel and unheard of, to say the least, and that seemed to turn common sense on its head and bid good-bye to all of materialism's cherished beliefs, nurtured so lovingly over the last two centuries.

Contemporary research at the frontiers of physical science has rewarded man with some astonishing insights into the nature of mind and the reality of the external world. Evidence, concrete scientific evidence, is being furnished to the end that consciousness does indeed play an essential role in the nature of physical reality. The impact of modern physics has been so tremendous that concrete daily experience, when subjected to detailed scrutiny in the light of the new discoveries, dissolves into a maelstrom of fleeting semi-real experiences. For today's sincere physicist, the distinction between subject and object, cause and effect, is blurred, and he has no choice but to introduce a strong holistic element in his world-view.

A stage has been reached in theoretical physics where the analysis of the world into separate autonomous parts is neither relevant nor adequate. The emphasis today is on undivided wholeness wherein the difference between the observer and the observed is fuzzed.

Modern-day science is becoming more certain by the day that our world-experience, the macroscopic reality, determines the microscopic reality that constitutes it—paradoxical but true nevertheless. Travelling into the fuzzy and nebulous world of the atom, it has ascertained that an atomic or subatomic entity sharpens itself into concrete reality only in the event of an observation being made. The observed reality is inseparable from the observing mechanism and measurement strategy.

A salient feature of the latest scientific theory is the admission that uncertainty and unpredictability are fundamental ingredients of cosmic phenomena and intrinsic to nature. The quantum theory has involved the mind and the individual in so basic a manner in its attempt at interpreting tangible experiences of reality that it has delivered a death-blow to the deterministic world-perspective that had held the scientific thought of man in a vice-grip since the age of reason. Shattering the chain of cause and effect and awarding the individual the unique ability to influence and fashion his world, enlightened science no longer dismisses free will. Today, the enlightened human reason has made provision for prayer—science is swiftly moving towards God.

Advanced contemporary scientific literature bears remarkable resemblance to literature regarding what used to be brashly branded before as “metaphysics, mysticism and moonshine.” The alert reader of Sri Aurobindo will find his following words come to vibrant life:

“Intellect, if it goes sincerely to its own end, has to return and give this report: ‘I cannot know; there is, or at least it seems to me that there may be or even must be Something beyond, some ultimate Reality, but about its truth I can only speculate; it is either unknowable or cannot be known by me.’ Or, if it has received some light on the way from what is beyond it, it can say too: ‘There is perhaps a consciousness beyond Mind, for I seem to catch glimpses of it and even to get intimations from it. If that is in touch with the Beyond or if it is itself the consciousness of the Beyond and you can find some way to reach it, then this Something can be known but not otherwise.’”<sup>1</sup>

Science has at last begun to come of age.

Adolescence and a shedding of the arrogant stance of omniscience have altered radically science’s attitude vis-à-vis yoga, its apparent antithesis. On retrospection does the realisation dawn that it was partial knowledge that led man into labelling science and yoga as contradictory pursuits, and declaring pompously that there could be no meeting ground.

Science is basically a careful observation coupled with experiment which

<sup>1</sup> *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 22), p 157.



enables construction of successful theories regarding physical experience. Regularities and patterns are sought in order that laws may be evolved that explain the behaviour of physical forces. Key and centre to the scientific approach is the scientist's willingness to relinquish a theory in the event of a better one being proposed—and it is this trait that stands science in good stead when compared to dogmatic obscurantist religions, and affirms its status as a sister and complementary pursuit to yoga when it comes to searching for the ultimate Truth. Science departs on its search, self-confident with the assumption that the Truth it seeks will be objective, and that the goal being reached, it will become possible to explain all subjective phenomena in terms of it.

Yoga on the other hand, as Sri Aurobindo explains, "...proceeds on the opposite view that the ultimate Truth is spiritual and subjective and it is in that ultimate Light that we must view objective phenomena."<sup>1</sup> And he adds: "Yoga, however, is scientific to this extent that it proceeds by subjective experiment and bases all its findings on experience; mental intuitions are admitted only as a first step and are not considered as realisation—they must be confirmed by being translated into and justified by experience. As to the value of the experience itself, it is doubted by the physical mind because it is subjective, not objective. But has the distinction much value? Is not all knowledge and experience subjective at bottom? Objective external physical things are seen very much in the same way by human beings because of the construction of the mind and senses; with another construction of mind and sense quite another account of the physical world would be given—Science itself has made that very clear."<sup>2</sup>

Both science and yoga are vehicles of human quest—quest for the ultimate Truth. The essential dichotomy bases itself on the seeker's outlook, and the illusory conflict between the two has been an unfortunate fallout of the human penchant of clinging to old moorings, the progressive evolutionary pressure notwithstanding. Halting almost at the start of his journey, the scientist had claimed matter as the sole reality, while the ascetic had negated the physical world with equal vehemence.

Sri Aurobindo sets the balance right when he says:

"The affirmation of a divine life upon earth and an immortal sense in mortal existence can have no base unless we recognise not only eternal Spirit as the inhabitant of this bodily mansion, the wearer of this mutable robe, but accept Matter of which it is made, as a fit and noble material out of which He weaves constantly His garbs, builds recurrently the unending series of His mansions."<sup>3</sup>

And then he further says: "If modern Materialism were simply an unintelligent acquiescence in the material life, the advance might be indefinitely delayed. But since its very soul is the search for Knowledge, it will be unable to cry a halt;

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

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

<sup>3</sup> *The Life Divine* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 18), p. 6.

as it reaches the barriers of sense-knowledge and of the reasoning from sense-knowledge, its very rush will carry it beyond and the rapidity and sureness with which it has embraced the visible universe is only an earnest of the energy and success which we may hope to see repeated in the conquest of what lies beyond, once the stride is taken that crosses the barrier.”<sup>1</sup>

That the barrier will be crossed in not too distant a future, can be stated *ex cathedra* given the position coordinates of science on its journey towards the ultimate Truth.

The marriage of science and yoga could not have been more opportune and it certainly is no fortuitous coincidence that the union will materialise in the New Age. Its bearing on the tumultuous and chaotic world-situation can be looked forward to with hope, and a steadying of the ship is in order.

I conclude with a few lines from Sri Auróbindo’s poem “Discoveries of Science III” :

The objects that you prove are not their form.  
 Each is a mass of forces thrown in shape.  
 The forces caught, their inner lines escape  
 In a fathomless consciousness beyond mind’s norm.

Probe it and you shall meet a Being still  
 Infinite, nameless, mute, unknowable.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Collected Poems* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 5), p. 168.