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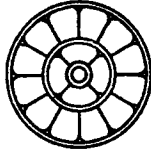
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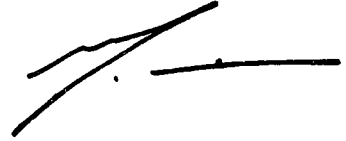
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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THE ARYA AND THE PSYCHIC BEING

AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO

How is it that in the Arya you never laid any special stress on the psychic centre and considered the centre above the head the most important in your Yoga? Is it because you wrote under different conditions and circumstances? But what exactly made you shift your emphasis?

YOU might as well ask me why in my pre-Arya writings I laid stress on other things than the centre above the head or in the [post-] Arya on the distinction between Overmind and Supermind. The stress on the psychic increased because it was found that without it no true transformation is possible.

5.7.1937

THE PSYCHIC BEING AND THE SUPERMIND

TWO LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

THE psychic is not, by definition, that part which is in direct touch with the supramental plane,—although, once the connection with the supramental is made, it gives to it the readiest response. The psychic part of us is something that comes direct from the Divine and is in touch with the Divine. In its origin it is the nucleus pregnant with divine possibilities that supports this lower triple manifestation of mind, life and body. There is this divine element in all living beings, but it stands hidden behind the ordinary consciousness, is not at first developed and, even when developed, is not always or often in the front; it expresses itself, so far as the imperfection of the instruments allows, by their means and under their limitations. It grows in the consciousness by Godward experience, gaining strength every time there is a higher movement in us, and finally, by the accumulation of these deeper and higher movements, there is developed a psychic individuality,—that which we call usually the psychic being. It is always this psychic being that is the real, though often the secret cause of man's turning to the spiritual life and his greatest help in it. It is therefore that which we have to bring from behind in the front in the yoga.

*

... the mind, vital and physical can allow other things to mix with their reception of the supramental influence and spoil its truth. The psychic is pure in its response and allows no such mixture.

The supramental change can take place only if the psychic is awake and is made the chief support of the descending supramental power.

SRI AUROBINDO TO A RELIGIOUS FANATIC

A PASSAGE FROM A LETTER

ALL fanaticism is false, because it is a contradiction of the very nature of God and of Truth. Truth cannot be shut up in a single book, Bible or Veda or Koran, or in a single religion. The Divine Being is eternal and universal and infinite and cannot be the sole property of the Mussulmans or of the Semitic religions only,—those that happened to be in a line from the Bible and to have Jewish or Arabian prophets for their founders. Hindus and Confucians and Taoists and all others have as much right to enter into relation with God and find the Truth in their own way. All religions have some truth in them, but none has the whole truth; all are created in time and finally decline and perish. Mahomed himself never pretended that the Koran was the last message of God and there would be no other. God and Truth outlast these religions and manifest themselves anew in whatever way or form the Divine Wisdom chooses. You cannot shut up God in the limitations of your own narrow brain or dictate to the Divine Power and Consciousness how or where or through whom it shall manifest; you cannot put up your puny barriers against the divine Omnipotence. These again are simple truths which are now being recognised all over the world; only the childish in mind or those who vegetate in some formula of the past deny them.

23.10.1929

SKY-RIMS

As each gigantic vision of sky-rim
Preludes yet stranger spaces of the sea,
For those who dare the rapturous wave-whim
Of soul's uncharted trance-profundity
There is no end to God-horizonry:
A wideness ever new awaits behind
Each ample sweep of plumbless harmony
Circling with vistaed gloriole the mind.

For the Divine is no fixed paradise,
But truth beyond great truth—a spirit-heave
From unimaginable sun-surprise
Of beauty to immense love-lunar eve,
Dreaming through lone sidereal silence on
To jet anoter alchemy of dawn.

K. D. SETHNA

“WHAT IS THE DIVINE?”

A TALK BY THE MOTHER ON 24 MAY 1967

YESTERDAY someone wrote to me asking: “After all, what is the Divine?” I answered. I told him that I was giving a reply to help him, but there could be a hundred which would all be good, one as good as another.

“The Divine is lived, but cannot be defined.”

Then I added: “But as you put to me the question, I answer: ‘The Divine is the absolute of perfection, the eternal source of all that exists, of whom we become conscious progressively, all the while being Himself from all eternity.’ ”

Once someone told me also that it was for him something simply unthinkable. So I answered him: “No! That does not help you. You have only to think that the Divine is all (at the maximum, yes), all that we want to become in our highest, most luminous aspiration. All that we want to become, that is the Divine.” He was so happy, he told me: “Oh! That way it becomes easy!”

But when you look—as you look coming out of the mental activity and as you look at the experience which you have—and you say to yourself: “How to say this? How to explain?”, then what is nearest, most accessible is this: into this “something” which we aspire to become, we put instinctively, spontaneously, all that we wish to be, all that we conceive of as most wonderful, all that is the object of an intense aspiration (intense and ignorant), all that. And with all that you come near to the “Something” and... Essentially, it is not by the thought that you have the contact; you have the contact through something *identical* in the being, which wakes up by the intensity of the aspiration. And then for oneself, as soon as this contact—the fusion—is obtained, even if only for a second, there is no longer any need to explain: it is something that imposes itself in an absolute way and that is outside and beyond all explanation.

But in order to reach there, each one puts into it whatever guides him most easily.

And when one has the experience, at the moment of this fusion, this joining, it becomes evident to the consciousness that only the identical can know the identical and that therefore it is the proof that It is there (*Mother points to the centre of the heart*). It is a proof that It is there. And it is by the intensity of aspiration that this awakens.

When I received the question, it was altogether as if the person was telling me, “Yes, yes, all that is very good, but after all what is this that is the Divine?” Then I read his letter; there came a silence, a total silence of everything, and as though a *single* look gathering together everything and wanting to see.... I remained in this way, looking, till the words came; then I wrote: “Here is *one* answer; there could be a hundred, one as good as another.”

At the same time, when there was this look towards the “something” that needed definition, there was a great silence everywhere and a great aspiration (*gesture as of a flame rising up*), and all the forms which this aspiration took. It was very interesting... the story of the aspiration of earth... towards the wonderful Unknown which one wants to become.

And everyone—whoever was destined to make the joining—in his simplicity believes that the bridge he has followed is the only one. The result: religions, philosophies, dogmas, credos—battle.

Seen as a whole it is very interesting, very charming, with a Smile that looks out, oh! this Smile... that looks out. This Smile, as though it were saying, “You make it so complicated and it could be so simple!”

To express it in a literary way, one might say: “Such complications for such a simple thing: to be oneself.”

(*Silence*)

And you, what do you think the Divine is?

I do not know, it is a question I never put to myself.

Neither do I! I have never put the question to myself. Because as soon as there was a need to know, there was spontaneously an answer. And an answer, not with words which one debates: an answer... something like that, a vibration. It is a thing almost constant now.

Naturally men create difficulties (I believe they must like them very much, because...) for everything, for the *least* thing there is always a world of difficulties. So one passes one's time saying: “Quiet, quiet, quiet—be calm.” And the body itself lives in the midst of difficulties (it also seems to like them!) but all of a sudden the cells sing out their OM... spontaneously. And then it is as though a child's joy in all these cells which say (*Mother, in a tone of wonder*): “Ah yes! One is able to do that? One has the right to do that!” It is touching

And the effect is immediate: this great Vibration, peaceful, all powerful.

As for me, if I was not under the constant pressure of all the wills around, I would say: “Why do you want to know what the Divine is? What does it matter to you? You have only to become it.” But they do not understand a joke.

“I want to know what the Divine is.”

“But no, it is altogether useless.”

“Ah!”

They answer you with a scandalised look: “Ah! it isn't interesting?”

“You have no need to know: you have to become it.”

For them, I mean the vast intellectual majority, they cannot conceive that one can do or be something without knowing what it is.

That also, one might say if one likes the joke: “It is only when one does not know that one is most divine.”

(Mother goes into contemplation)

For those who like definitions, there is another way of answering to “What is the Divine?”... “A vastness, smiling and luminous.”

And it is *there*, is it not? It is there.

After a few days

I have something to add to what we said the other day about the Divine. Someone asks me: “And what is God?” It is about a text of Sri Aurobindo. Here it is:

“Love leads us from the suffering of division into the bliss of perfect union, but without losing that joy of the act of union which is the soul’s greatest discovery and for which the life of the cosmos is a long preparation. Therefore to approach God by love is to prepare oneself for the greatest possible spiritual fulfilment.”¹

It is in the context of the last phrase that I am asked: “What is God?” Therefore I said (I took up the word “God”): “It is the name man has given to all that surpasses him and dominates him, all that he cannot know but to which he submits.”

Instead of putting “to all that surpasses him”, one might put “to that which surpasses him”, because “all that” is debatable from the intellectual point of view. I mean there is a “something”—a something which is indefinable and inexplicable—and this something, man has always felt, dominates him. It transcends all possible understanding and it dominates him. And so the religions have given it a name; man has called him “God”; the English call him God; in another language he is called another way, but finally it is that.

I do not give any definition purposely. Because the feeling of all my life has been that it is a word, and a word behind which people have put many very undesirable things... this idea of God, for example, who wants to be unique, as they say: “God is unique.” But they feel it and they say as Anatole France said it, I believe it is in the *Révolte des Anges*: “This God who wants to be the only one and *all alone* ” That is the thing which had made me completely atheist, if one might say so, in my childhood; I did not accept a being who declared himself to be unique and all-powerful, *whoever he might be*. Even if he was unique and all-powerful (*Mother laughs*), he must not have the right to proclaim it!¹ It was

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Cent Vol 21, p 523

like this in my mind. I could give a discourse upon it for a full hour, to say how in each religion they confronted it.

In any case, I gave what seemed to me the most objective definition. And like the other day, in "What is the Divine?", I tried to give the impression of the Thing; here I wanted to fight against the use of the word, which for me is hollow, but dangerously hollow.

I remember a verse from Savitri which is very powerful and which says in a line all that wonderfully. It says: "The Nameless that saw God born."¹

(Notes on the Way, pp 64-68)

¹ The Bodiless Namelessness that saw God born
And tries to gain from the mortal's mind and soul
A deathless body and a divine name
(Savitri, Cent Vol 28, p 40)

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

TWO PERSONAL LETTERS

YOUR long letter was a great relief. You have been on my mind ever since we last got a ghostlike sense of your presence somewhere. Your total disappearance puzzled and worried all your friends. In the meantime we heard nasty news about the activities of your ill-wishers. You must have come to know of them too. But you are a soul as tough on one side as it is tender on the other—a sort of Belisarius though not battered by Fate so horribly. Belisarius was the greatest general during the reign of Justinian in Rome. Both he and his emperor married dancing girls. The empress conspired his ruin and had him degraded. His wife ran away with a monk. In the end the once-famous soldier used to stand under the Arch of his own triumph in Byzantium—a blind beggar yet unbroken in spirit. Longfellow in a poem on him concluded by weaving a versified version of the hero's own words.

The unconquerable will
This, too, can bear;—I still
Am Belisarius!

As long as you are you and, what is more, feel intensely that you are a child of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, nothing can down you. You are a born fighter, but we are very glad that in being courageous you did not forget that, when occasion demanded, even Krishna, as Sri Aurobindo has told us, could be discreet and did not consider it un-Avataric to run away.

Your attitude to the super-Shakespearean “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” is profoundly illumined. You have turned all the wounds into openings to the Divine. The cuts and thrusts have not stopped at the outer ego: they have been received by you in the inner soul where the Divine is seated and where that secret Presence can use them to fuel the sacred fire burning towards an ever greater Consciousness. And how have you done this alchemic reception of the hurtful dross? The answer is simple: whatever happens to you you have offered to the Divine with an intense faith and devotion. Accepting your offering, the Divine has made the “Purusha no bigger than the thumb of a man”, which is the Upanishad's vision of the evolving soul in us, grow in bliss and beauty within you and come closer to the splendour and strength of the Supreme Himself.

The vivid picture you have drawn of the emergence of the new You from the old is rather exaggerated on the latter side. The adjectival torrent in which you have sunk the old fellow—“What a smug, self-satisfied, arrogant, puffed-up, complacent, pretentious and hopelessly gullible intellectual booby I was”—out-Hamlets Hamlet in his passionately polysyllabic pessimistic mood, as when he cries out—

How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Are to me now the uses of this world—

or in a grander gloomy style he rages in poetic prose: "This goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical dome fretted with golden fire,—why, it appears to me no other than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours."

It is always salutary to see one's shortcomings clearly and you have done well to pass beyond the stage where you were before the multiple blows fell on you, but to us the person we knew deserved none of the derogatory hammering you have given him, except perhaps the epithet "gullible" in your relationship to the friend who has betrayed you. We see your passage to be from "fine" to "finer" and we don't at all think we poured our love upon an undeserving uppish chap. It is your foe, masked as friend, whom the adjective-abounding Shakespeare would have called a "lecherous, treacherous, smiling villain" and who by digging your grave in secret is accurately hit off in that magnificent impeachment in *Measure for Measure*:

man, proud man,
Drest in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As make the angels weep.

To turn to a much more pleasant dispute, let me touch on a discussion I have been having with our mutual, widely cultured English friend, a sincere devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, one who means a great deal to me and whose fine aesthetic judgment has been a powerful spur to my career as a poet. Lately she has reacted rather over-emphatically against a certain tendency of expression in English which seems to come more easily to non-English speakers than to native ones. My impression is that she has a point but that in a language like English, so multi-rooted, plastic, vari-mooded and open to "liberties", all tendencies can become naturalised. One's sense of any strangeness should not solidify into a barrier—unless a writer is found patently ignorant of the idiom. Our friend has said: "My English soul rebels at abstract nouns preceded by the definite article. It's o.k. in French of course!" Thus, when she was here last year she remarked that the title of my book on Mallarmé's symbolist poetry—*The Obscure and the Mysterious*—was not quite English. In my recent correspondence with her I cited several uses of the kind from English and she wrote her comment on them:

“For my own interest I will try to analyse my ‘intuitive’ reaction to the examples you quote, and add some of my own:

<i>Typical</i>	<i>Hors de catégorie</i>	<i>A-typical</i>
“The Everlasting” (Shakespeare)	“The Eternal”	“The Divine” (The Mother)
“The Slam” (ditto)	“The Supreme”	“The Ineffable”—“the Inane”
Shelley’s “where the Eternal are”	(used by Sri Aurobindo	(Sri Aurobindo)
“The Naked and the Dead”	and the Mother)	“The Obscure and the
(used as a novel’s title)	Shelley’s “The One”,	Mysterious” (Amal’s
Blake’s “the eternal’s”	“The Many”	book-title)
	“The flight of the alone	“The Art of the Soluble”
	to the Alone” (after Plotinus)	(title of Medawar’s book)

I was most intrigued by her looking askance at “the Divine”, I have four times employed this locution in the first part of this very letter and we come across it every now and then in not only the Mother but also Sri Aurobindo. According to our friend, an English-speaking person would expect to see “God” in contexts where the Mother says “the Divine”. She adds: “Admittedly it is grammatically correct and functionally effective—we know what is meant. We also know that the Mother had special reasons of her own for avoiding the word ‘God’. Nevertheless we feel that the Mother, being French, could not have been aware of the horrid effect of ‘the Divine’ in English—it sounds like an euphemism and therefore to the English ear, accustomed as it is to hearing a spade called a bloody shovel (if you will pardon the coarseness of the expression—I merely wish to stress a tendency to directness in the language which makes it difficult to avoid a commonly accepted word without sounding phoney or hypocritical or simply ‘foreign’)—to the English ear it’s odd.” Our friend also insists that the correct translation of “le Divin”, when used in French where it would be natural, is not “the Divine” but “the Deity” or the “the Godhead”. She supposes that Sri Aurobindo used the expression “the Divine” out of deference to the Mother’s wishes, “because he wrote ‘The Hour of God’ and ‘God shall grow up while wise men talk and sleep’ and ‘A step and all is sky and God’. He did not write ‘The Hour of the Divine’—thanks be to God!”

I wrote back:

“I am afraid you are overdoing your English soul. No doubt you have on your side the fact that no English Dictionary, not even the OED, cites an example of ‘the Divine’ down the centuries. But the American *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (College Edition, 1969) gives on p. 388, col. 2 seventeen uses of ‘divine’ and the eleventh use notes: ‘the Divine’, *a.* God, *b.* (sometimes l.c.) the spiritual aspect of a man; the group of attributes and qualities of mankind regarded as godly or godlike.’ No quotations are given as examples, but I suspect writers like Emerson and Whitman can be drawn upon. At least in the American philosopher Josiah Royce’s book, *The World and the*

Individual, published in 1901, I have chanced upon the phrase: "... in the world as a whole, the divine accomplishes its purpose, attains its goal..."¹ 'The Divine' may not be British but it has historically proved to be English, even if transatlantically English. And now that such a master of languages as Sri Aurobindo has set his seal upon this use, with so insistent a significance, all ears should get attuned to it."

In my latest letter I wrote:

"I have been keeping my eyes skinned for the use of 'the Divine' in English. Casually turning the pages of Bernard Shaw's *Three Plays for Puritans* in the Penguin Edition, what do I chance upon on pp. 133-34? In the 'Prologue' to his play 'Caesar and Cleopatra' included here, Shaw imagines an Egyptian god addressing the modern audience. Towards the end of the 'Prologue' the god says: '.. I had not spoken so much but that it is in the nature of a god to struggle for ever with the dust and the darkness, and to drag from them, by the force of his longing for the divine, more life and more light.' Now here is the use we are looking for in English literature itself and by one of the most modern minds. What is equally striking is that—but for the small *d*—the utterance might have come from a book of Sri Aurobindo's!

"After this discovery I came across a few more examples. My friend Ravindra Khanna drew my attention to an incident connected with Tennyson's 'Crossing the Bar'. For years and years in both England and America critics have exercised themselves over the question of why Tennyson's "pilot" remained on board after the vessel had crossed the harbour bar. Tennyson's explanation was that the pilot had been on board all the time, but in the dark he had not seen him. The pilot, he said, was 'that Divine and Unseen who is always guiding us'.

"Again, there are those lines in AE's 'Star Teachers':

These myriad eyes that look on me are mine,
Wandering beneath them I have found again
The ancient ample moment, the divine,
The God-root within men.

"Further, Paul Theroux, after visiting writer Jan Morris's house near Cruccieth, Wales, related in the course of commenting on it and on her that she wrote, 'Animists believe that the divine is to be found in every living thing...'

"Finally, in addition to my early citation from the *Random House Dictionary*, let me quote Webster's *New International Dictionary of the English Language*: 'Divine—often cap: something having the qualities and attributes of an ultimate reality that is regarded as sacred.' The example given is: 'man's relation to the Divine.' "

¹ P. 292 of the edition by Dover Publications Inc., New York

My latest discovery is the title “Depicting the divine in Nature” of a review of *Early Poussain Exhibition* in the weekly from London, *The Times Literary Supplement*, October 28-November 2, 1988, p. 1204.

If you run into any helpful phrase—preferably in English literature—bearing on the bone of contention, do pass it on to me. I am waiting for our friend’s reply.¹ (9.12.1988)

*

Postscript

The suggestion that Sri Aurobindo started using the term “the Divine” “in deference to the Mother’s wishes” may be too broad in its sweep, but a brief check indicates that his use occurs only after he met the Mother—that is, after March 29, 1914. A light perusal of some of his pre-1914 writings, including *The Yoga and Its Objects*, *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, early commentaries on the Isha and Kena Upanishads and early essays on Vedanta, Hinduism, Yoga, etc. (commentaries and essays published in *Archives and Research*) shows not a single instance of the term “the Divine” and hundreds of instances of “God”.

The earliest use of the term occurs in the September 1914 issue of *Arya*: it occurs on p. 9 in the second chapter of *The Life Divine* and p. 48 in the second chapter of *The Synthesis of Yoga*, as published in that journal

However, it may be noted that in the 1913 essay “The Evolutionary Aim in Yoga” the seventh paragraph (see reprint in *Bulletin*, November 1982, p. 10, lines 22-23) has the sentence: “The human first touches the divine and then becomes the divine.” The use here is not quite the same as the term “the Divine” for God, but it does evince a verbal turn in which the later expression may find a plausible basis for its development. So the seed for the actual term may be traced in pre-1914 days: the term itself takes shape after Sri Aurobindo’s association with the Mother and with the growth of that association it becomes markedly common. The letters to the disciples teem with it, but nowhere does Sri Aurobindo give any sign that he was doing something somewhat unnatural in the English language.

*

Your ideal and aspiration are admirable when you say: “My one regret so far is that I am still to nurture a flower of purity, perfection and harmony in me to offer at the feet of the Divine...” But as the state you aim at cannot be achieved in a short time, the important question is: “What do you do meanwhile?” The

¹ The friend was gracious enough to close the discussion by saying that she too had recently come across occurrences of “the Divine” in current English writing —Amal Kiran

real job of the idealist and the aspirant is to offer at the Divine's feet all the impurities, all the imperfections, all the discords in him. What is crucial and central is the act of offering and, as a result, the receiving of the Divine's guidance from within, which would help one to be a little less impure, less imperfect, less discordant the next time. I don't mean that one should not on one's own try to outgrow one's all-too-human state, but the secret of sadhana is to put oneself in the hands of the Higher Power and get its guidance from the deep heart instead of planning all the time by the light of one's own tiny candle of intelligence.

To be dejected because the wonderful flower you mention is far off is hardly the right frame of mind for a sadhak. The fact that you have become aware of the need to reach the Supreme is a tremendous grace. To respond to the touch of this grace you have to put at its disposal whatever happens from day to day and get free of the wholly personal element with which we usually meet the calls and challenges of the relationships and circumstances in whose midst our hours are spent. Nothing is too trivial for the Divine's attention. When the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were with us bodily, they welcomed our wish to be led by their wisdom and power in everything. No doubt, they may have wanted to be free from inquiries like "When I get out of my bed in the morning, which foot should I first put on the floor?"—though I know that even such banalities they patiently dealt with. But I have seen how most naturally and interestedly the Mother attended to two pleas for help which I dared to convey to her in spite of the evident disapproval of her attendants. They were from a friend of mine. One was: "I suffer from constipation"—and the other: "I can't sleep properly in the afternoon." I could see from her face that she appreciated the naiveté with which these messages had been sent as if to an actual physical mummy raised to the *n*th degree. I could see also that an answer from her consciousness was spontaneously going forth. Of course, my friend knew that he had himself to get in contact with her inwardly in these as in other matters, but to bring them outwardly to her notice when her divinity was with us in an embodied condition was understood to help one all the more. And the Mother accepted in a wide sense the responsibility she had incurred by getting embodied.

No doubt, we had to avoid the mistake of thinking it just a matter of course to consult her: a genuine prayer, a true self-dedication had to accompany the gesture of informing her. Similarly, you have to sincerely appeal to her for guidance after setting before her all the movements of your daily life without making up your mind in advance as to what you should do on one occasion or another. If you follow this practice in as much detail as you can manage, you'll see the slow yet sure progression towards the spotless, flawless, perfume-pervaded lotus you dream of as the life you want to offer to those Feet that are the ecstatic end of all journeys.

Now to your attraction towards poetry apropos of my reference, in a

compilation by me of mostly my letters to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and their replies, to that stanza of Sri Aurobindo's which I consider to sum up with mantric power the goal of the Integral Yoga:

Arms taking to a voiceless supreme delight,
 Life that meets the Eternal with close breast,
 An unwalled mind dissolved in the Infinite,
 Force one with unimaginable rest.

The variations you suggest are poetic enough—"silent" or "wordless" instead of "voiceless"—"meeting" in place of "that meets"—and for the third line either
 A mind unwalled and merged in the Infinite

or

A mind unhorizoned in the Infinite.

But when poetry comes from the sheer Overmind to constitute the mantra the order no less than the choice of the words and the wide as well as the weighty rhythm they create are of basic importance and significance. In your versions the sense of remote distances of divinity getting caught with an intense yet quiet immediacy is lost in what Sri Aurobindo would have called bright combinations and permutations playing about in the plane which he has termed "the poetic intelligence". Your "silent" has no surprise in it. One would mentally expect it. "Wordless" is rather feeble and lacks sufficient concreteness. Nothing except "voiceless" will convey an absolute and ultimate quality at the same time that it gives an almost physical substance to the "delight" which refrains from declaring itself with a voice. The silence becomes substantial, the wordlessness becomes seizable—and they have to be such if "arms", the instruments of the body's aspiration, are to get, by self-dedication, into touch, however subtly, with a "supreme delight". This delight, in order to be capable of giving contact to our physical self, has to exist as a Being of Bliss and not as an impersonal *ānanda*. You cannot replace "voiceless" without attenuating the spiritual suggestion appropriate to the matter-part of man the aspirant. In the second line to substitute "meeting" for "that meets" is to bring about a monotony of rhythm in relation to the first line's "taking". Besides, the vividness of "Life" 's performance of an action is lost. "Arms" has an in-built vividness: "Life" hasn't and needs to be made "living", as it were, by making it directly do something. Such doing would prepare and be in tune with the "close breast" Sri Aurobindo ascribes to it at the line's end. Your third line is too fluid in both the versions. The first version has again no surprise: "merged" is commonplace. The second is more picturesque with a typical Aurobindonian word—"unhorizoned"—but it is wanting in strength. The original's massiveness and power of movement, partly due to the unusual past participle "dissolved" and partly to the flanking of

“mind” with two qualifiers each on either side, produces the impression of something specially done to the mind by a sort of two-pronged attack for infinitising it. The attack is all the more vigorous because both “unwalled” and “dissolved” are two-syllabled and have a mutually reinforcing effect by the *l*-sound along with the *d*-sound common to them.

Your experiment with the last line—

Lull one with an ineffable rest—

is not only the weakest of your proposals but also a complete misunderstanding equally of Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual revelation and of his syntactical structure. His line represents the fourth limb of the plenary or integral realisation: it does not just round off the combination of body, life-energy and mind. The word “Force” is a noun and not a verb as your “Lull” is, and “one” is not a pronoun standing as the object to “Force”. Sri Aurobindo wants to say: “Force that is one with what seems its utter opposite—namely, rest—but what is, in a way beyond imagination, not really so.” The comma after the third line’s “infinite” should have alerted you to Sri Aurobindo’s continuation of his series of the superb realities to be experienced.

I may remark that the six-syllabic adjective “unimaginable” cannot ever be replaced. Its length is essential to suggest not only the extreme wonderfulness, which keeps defying even conception, of the state spoken of but also the sustained sovereignty packed into a “rest” which can be equated with “force”. In comparison, “ineffable” is piffling. (18.10.1990)

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

SHAW AND SRI AUROBINDO

A LETTER FROM K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR TO THE EDITOR

I WAS looking into the *Mother India* of October 1990, and chanced upon your remarks on Shaw and Sri Aurobindo on p. 652. On my first visit to U.K. in 1951, I visited ‘Shaw’s Corner’, Ayot, St. Lawrence. This was on 22 September ’51, and scanning his Library I saw prominently *The Life Divine* (the 2 volumes 1939-40 edition). Was the author of *Man and Superman* specially attracted to *The Life Divine* with its projection of the Future Man endowed with the Supermind?

Failing eyesight notwithstanding, it is a tonic experience to read *Mother India*.

THE ASHRAM CHILDREN AND SRI AUROBINDO'S LIFE

A DREAM-DIALOGUE

(Continued from the issue of 24 November 1990)

“WE’VE come a long way from our discussion of the Indian Independence Movement, haven’t we?” said Sri Aurobindo. “How far have we come? I’ve lost the thread.”

“You were telling us about the innumerable clubs and Young Men’s Associations that sprang up in Bengal. Their avowed intention was to improve the physical health and strength of the youth though they were really formed to awaken in the young a deep love for the motherland. It was for her liberation that they were training and preparing themselves.”

“Oh yes! I think I told you that even before I joined the Swadeshi Movement, leaders like Barrister P. Mitter and Sarala Ghoshal had started several such clubs in Calcutta—all with secret political purposes. They had even envisaged armed rebellion, drawing their inspiration from the Japanese leader Okakura. After I realised that both their ways and their aims were similar to ours, I sent Jatin Banerjee to meet Mitter. Later when I went to Calcutta, Jatin introduced Mitter to me and the latter too took the revolutionary oath. I also met Hemchandra Das who worked for a Secret Society that had been formed in Medinipur. Das was wealthy and it was on his extensive property that the young men perfected their rifle-shooting skills. The idea of establishing these secret societies was not new in Bengal. Even my grandfather Rajnarayan Bose had founded a society of which Rabindranath Tagore too had, for some time, been a member. But though they may have had great dreams and aspirations, they lacked the strength to realise them. For that, young men were needed, young men strong in body and mind, who would fulfil these hopes and aspirations. Within a short time, this revolutionary mentality grew so widespread and intense that even some Indian government officials were sympathetic to it, and sometimes they openly expressed their views.”

“But is it true that these young men took the oath by holding the Gita in one hand and a sword in the other? Are such things really necessary?”

“The sword symbolised military revolt, the Gita was the symbol of the Spirit. Rebellion can move on many lines and use various means. For instance, in the French or the Russian Revolutions there was no place for either Religion or Spirituality. But the moment I realised that the country was not merely a mass of earth and rivers and trees, that she had a consciousness, a life, a soul of her own, she became for me the living embodiment of the Divine Mother. She was not only to be loved but also to be worshipped with devotion. Her worshipper must surrender his all, sacrifice himself at the feet of this divinity. She demanded total,

disinterested, selfless service, a service that did not ask for any fruit, not even for success—exactly the way it is described in the Gita, and so the Gita became the symbol of the spiritual attitude and aim that were expected of the young revolutionaries. Those who wished to work for the liberation of their country would take this vow of selflessness, sacrifice and total secrecy.”

“Outwardly what kind of work did you do?”

“Our aim was to establish as many centres of training as possible, first in Calcutta, then later in the district towns and even in the villages. These centres were not only for physical culture and body-building, but were meant to train young men in swimming and riding and the handling of weapons. Ostensibly, this was all that was done there, but the real purpose was to select a few and fit young men out of the many who attended those clubs and secretly build a group of dynamic young revolutionaries, adept in all the activities that a revolution demands. They would have to gather a growing pile of weapons, they would also learn how to make bombs. To these ends, if necessary, they might even have to go abroad, and some of them indeed did so. Sister Nivedita too helped these young men, and a few even went to Jagadish Bose who instructed them in the art of making bombs. An important activity of some of the leaders was to select and recruit new members for this rebel group. Thus in quite a short while the Revolutionary Movement grew strong and widespread.”

“Didn’t the British authorities guess what was happening?”

“No! Not at all! On the contrary, they were quite pleased that the young Indians were so preoccupied with physical culture, instead of other things. Only much later, when the bombs began to burst, did their eyes open.”

“The government was convinced that it was you who was the leader of this secret society, and Barinbabu too has written something to that effect.”

“So I have heard but it wasn’t quite completely true. In fact I was only the nominal leader but it was Barin, Mitter, the two Jatins who were actively in the forefront and the decisions were mostly taken by them. Only if they found themselves in difficult or dangerous situations did they consult me, otherwise I was only informed of the results of their actions. But Jatin Mukherjee would often ask for my opinion or advice. Of course, at that time I was living in Baroda and visited Calcutta only now and then, and so it was hardly possible for them to consult me regularly. Anyway I did not believe it was necessary. Once someone had been elected leader, he was expected to bear the sole responsibility for his decisions and his actions. But, unhappily, in a little while there began to appear signs of disharmony and discord among these leaders. This is a typically Bengali characteristic. The Bengali lacks patience and perseverance and is often incapable of working harmoniously with others. So too here, the first cracks in our team showed in the form of quarrels and disputes between the group led by Barin and the one which Jatin Banerjee led. Jatin was accused of being tyrannical and domineering, a very strict military disciplinarian, something that

many of the young men refused to stand for. It was rather ironical that earlier I had especially sent Barin to Calcutta in order to assist Jatin in his work. When the quarrel reached its climax—what looked like a point of no return—I found that I would have to go to Calcutta myself in order to set matters right. After listening to both the parties, we decided to set up a committee of five members, among whom were Jatin, P. Mitter and Nivedita. This solution seemed to work for a while, but soon after my return to Baroda it broke down as I had feared it might. I did not intervene in their disputes any more, I never liked quarrels of any kind.”

“So you knew Sister Nivedita in those days?”

“Knew her? Of course I did. Didn't I tell you that she had visited Baroda earlier and we had met? All right, I'll tell all about that later. Now to come back to the story of our Swadeshi Movement. I visited Medinipur with Jatin and Barin to found there a Revolutionary Centre. Hemchandra Das joined it as a member, he took the vow. His father was very wealthy. He was one of those who later went abroad to learn how to make bombs.

“The main duty of these leaders was to strengthen the movement by gathering young men as well as weapons and to spread it into the villages, into the very heart of the countryside. Later when I met Jatin Mukherjee, he too joined in the work of spreading the movement in many directions. He was indeed a true leader. I think I have already spoken to you about him. His noble spirit and high upspringing thoughts matched his tall strong physique. The vanities of name or fame or pride cast no shadows on him, in him there was no ambition or lust for power, nor any slightest trace of fear. He loved his motherland with all his being, with his body and life and mind. It was he who in every situation would turn to me for counsel, who would obey my instructions unquestioningly. Nivedita on the one hand, Jatin on the other—these were the two real leaders of our secret society. But I used to meet Nivedita very seldom, it was Jatin to whom I was close. Barin had the necessary ardour and enthusiasm, he could inspire the youth with his words, but unfortunately the pride of leadership was prominent in his nature. When he began editing the paper *Jugantar* in which he openly advocated revolution, it sent shock-waves through the nation. My articles too were published in that paper.”

“Please tell us something about Sister Nivedita.”

“Why? Don't you know something about her?”

“Yes, we do, but not well enough, in particular her contribution to the Independence Movement. We only know that she worked with you and wrote for your paper and that when you left Bengal you transferred your political responsibilities to her. But we would like to know how, being a Westerner herself, she learnt to love India so deeply, and how you met her in the first place.”

“Oh! that's a long story. Though you yourselves have answered a part of

your question. Since both she and I loved India deeply, we had this love in common and that is how we met.”

“But how could she love India as much? And if she was Swami Vivekananda’s follower, how is it that she left the path of religion and spirituality to join revolutionary politics?”

“Is that what is bothering you? Don’t you know how deeply Vivekananda loved his motherland and what agony it was for him to see her bound and enslaved? Though he was an ascetic, a sannyasi, he was constantly preoccupied with ways and means of liberating her. It is even said that he considered using armed rebellion. His travels in the West had served to sharpen the pain and that is why he charged his disciple to do the work he had not openly taken up. She, a true and fit disciple, gladly and enthusiastically accepted this work for the nation, since such was the will of her Master. This was the root cause of her participation in the Freedom Movement. Haven’t I told you that very many sadhaks, spiritually realised men, joined our Party, that many of them were actively working for the liberation of the country? The armed rebellion by Sannyasis described by Bankim in his *Anandamath* was not at all wholly imaginary.”

“How exactly did you meet Nivedita? Please tell us.”

“She had already heard about me and knew me to be a revolutionary: ‘a worshipper of Shakti’, was the term she used. That is perhaps why she came to Baroda to meet me. Also to draw the Maharaja into the Revolutionary Movement. That she was part of the Movement, I knew, and therefore somewhat guessed the reason for her visit to Baroda. Anyway, a friend and I went to the station to receive her. As we drove back through the city, her comments about some of the buildings lining the streets made my friend think that she was slightly touched in the head. Of course he was wrong, for there was nothing wrong with her understanding, only it expressed itself rather extravagantly. He did not like her preference for superlatives and his knowledge of architecture was also of the slightest. Nivedita, on the contrary, was very aesthetically perceptive and she had a deep knowledge about Art.”

“What was it she said?”

“Well, on seeing the Dharamshala, the pilgrims’ Rest-House, she exclaimed: ‘How lovely!’ But when she saw the College building she cried out: ‘Oh! how dreadful!’ (*Laughter*). All this made my friend believe that she was definitely not quite mentally balanced. Then she turned to me and asked me outright—‘Mr. Ghosh, are you a Worshipper of Shakti?’—that is to say, a revolutionary. After prolonged discussions she finally asked me to go and work in Bengal. I told her that I did not think the time had come for that. I was preparing myself inwardly and would jump into the fray when the right moment arrived. So, before leaving, she told me—‘We shall be waiting for you. And I want you to know that I am on your side.’ That is how we began our acquaintance. She met the Maharaja and openly asked him to join revolutionary politics. She was always extremely frank

and outspoken and wherever she went she advocated revolution in the most clear and unmistakable language. If you looked at her eyes, you could see the person within—a burning flame! When she spoke of Revolution, it was as if her whole soul would come to the fore through her words.”

“Was she not afraid of the Government?”

“Fear? She didn't even know what the word meant! Also, the Government treated her with quite a bit of consideration since she had many powerful and influential friends in Government circles, both in England and in India. She was Irish by birth and it was natural for her not to be on the side of the English. The Irish had been fighting against British Rule for a great many years already and Nivedita had been one of them. That is why she could share our pain and be so sympathetic to our cause.”

“What actually was her role in the Movement?”

“First, to tour the country and spread the Message of Revolt among the educated classes, and to initiate the great and the small, even the Rajas and Maharajas into the Cause. Her western background and her education made her most suitable for this work. She would mix freely with the young revolutionaries, help them in their need by providing them with money or shelter or even weapons. She even sent some young men abroad so that they might learn how to make bombs! She helped in so many ways! Can one ever know all that a revolutionary does? All that one can say with certitude is that her contribution to the success of the Swadeshi Movement is incalculable.”

“What actually was the kind of relationship you had with her?”

“It had mainly to do with the work. Since we were both very busy with our own work, we met only when it became necessary for us to meet. Neither of us was involved in revolutionary activities alone, we had other responsibilities too, like politics and writing articles for journals. Sometimes we made use of occasions like general meetings of the Swadeshis to discuss several other matters too.”

“Did she then completely give up Yogic practice?”

“What do you understand by the term ‘yogic practice’? If she considered the liberation of India to be the aim of her existence, then that was her Yoga. Is Yoga then merely sitting down at regular intervals to chant and pray and meditate leaving the rest of life a blank? That notion belongs to older ways of thought that believe Spirituality must be other-worldly, evading life. But from the day Nivedita's Guru instructed her to work for the cause of India's freedom, that cause became her yoga and her sadhana. She obeyed her Master with all her heart and soul, doing the work he had bidden her to do till her last breath.”

“What did she feel about the violent methods adopted by many revolutionaries—the robberies and assassinations of white people? Did she approve of them?”

“Could a person like her ever approve of such methods? But she was

obliged to admit that they were sometimes necessary. Truly speaking, our aims were always far above these narrow limited means. I have already explained to you that we wanted the entire nation to rise up in armed revolt. When that failed and the great leaders were flung into government jails, Nivedita was said to be heart-broken."

"But why did the Government not imprison her too?"

"Haven't I told you that she had very influential friends? Naturally the Government didn't dare touch her. All the same, there seems to have been some talk of her arrest and those same friends sent her to England for a while. When I came out of prison and resumed the publication of the *Karmayogin*, she began contributing articles to that paper. Some time later, she heard that I might be re-arrested and immediately advised me to write 'An Open Letter to My Countrymen'. When Ramchandra Majumdar brought the information of my imminent arrest, I received the command, the *Adesh*, to go to Chandernagore and later the command was to go to Pondicherry. The same night, I left Calcutta, leaving Nivedita in charge of the *Karmayogin*. This, in short, was my relationship with her. But I have described to you only one side of her nature. She had a profound knowledge and refined perception of India's art and literature, religion and philosophy and the education of our women. She knew and had exchanges with all the great minds of the age—Rabindranath, Jagadish Bose, Abanindranath, Tilak, all of them. It is largely due to her that Jagadish Bose received international scientific acclaim. It is she who helped Abanindranath awaken his artistic consciousness. In any case, it is clear that every Indian will be indebted to her forever. You should all read her books—*The Web of Indian Life*, *The Cradle-tales of Hinduism*, *Kali the Mother* and *The Master as I Saw Him*."

"Did she have any spiritual realisations?"

"She must have had, but we never discussed them. We were busy with politics and revolution. But if one looked well at her eyes one could tell that she could easily enter into the states of meditation and trance."

"Why was she obliged to leave the Ramakrishna Mission?"

"Because of her work in the Swadeshi Movement. The Ramakrishna Mission was after all a sort of cloister, a home for ascetics. Religion was its chief work and it believed also in social service in the outer life. To live within its precincts and take part in politics was against its rules, as it is against ours in our Ashram. We here may be interested in politics but we are forbidden to take part in it. Why? Because if it were not so, we would be deviating from the main purpose of our life here. Secondly, participating in politics would result in government intervention, even its wrath perhaps and endanger the very existence of the community. In the same way, Nivedita, ardent disciple of Vivekananda though she was, was obliged to leave the Mission that had been established by him. Such was her obedience to his injunctions."

"It is strange that in spite of being a woman, she still took such an active part in the revolution."

“Why should it seem strange? Europe has known several such women. Jeanne d’Arc was one such example, indeed a shining one. Haven’t you read about her? And the history of the French Revolution? And in the history of our own country, there have been innumerable fearless, warlike women, like the Rani of Jhansi. Again, so many women took part in the Irish Revolution, fought and suffered and even underwent torture. Just the other day, during the upheavals in Bengal, what did the women there not undergo! So you see, there is nothing to be surprised at in women being brave and warlike. In fact, it should be strange if it were not so. Or rather, one may say, isn’t it beautifully strange that all of you, boys and girls, should have lived together here in this Ashram, since your earliest childhood, and undergone a boldly planned physical education?”

“In the first place Vivekananda had brought Nivedita to India so that she might teach the women of his land to awaken and to arise. It is difficult for you to imagine to-day the backwardness of the Indian women of that time. Nivedita not only brought awareness to them, she energetically shook the whole sleeping India awake, explaining to her that she could never make any advance or progress unless she became free. What we should wish for is that instead of just one Sister Nivedita a Nivedita be born in every Indian household.”

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

(Translated by Jhumur from the Bengali)

A DROP

SOMETIMES my impatience yearns
 To lift the mysterious veil
 From the future’s formless face—
 To take a daring peep,
 And—if possible—a great leap
 Into the vast unknown.
 The discord of ordinary acts
 And the inane and dreary present
 Are all the more unbearable
 When shines afar the glorious empyrean.
 Grant but a moment of Grace,
 To project me in the snowscape
 Of the bliss-radiant-heights.
 Thirsty I stand, an aspiring mendicant,
 At Thy doors, for a drop
 From the Divine source.

SHYAM KUMARI

SOME EPISODES IN THE LIFE OF AN “EXTRAORDINARY GIRL”

A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION

(Continued from the issue of 24 November 1990)

“... Because I Love Sri Aurobindo”

My father died in 1938 at Calcutta when I was thirteen years old. Hearing the news, my uncle hurried there from Pondicherry. After a few weeks, my uncle, my mother and I left for Kashmir. It was perhaps my uncle's way of helping my mother over her bereavement. From Kashmir, I accompanied my uncle to Pondicherry for the November Darshan, while my mother went back to Calcutta.

It turned out, however, that there was no Darshan, for it was the month that Sri Aurobindo met with an accident to his right leg. I quickly made up my mind not to return to Calcutta. I decided that if the Mother permitted, I would stay in the Ashram for good. I told my uncle of my decision, and it was perhaps he who spoke to the Mother about it. One day during my usual visit to her, she broached the question of my desire to stay and said, “If you knew that as a result your mother might commit suicide, what would you do?” I answered that I was ready even for that. Then she said, “All right, but don't write about it to your mother just now. You can have Jyotirmoyee as your companion—she will look after you.”

I was extremely happy not only for her permission to stay, but for having been given Jyotirmoyee as my guardian. I had already struck a deep friendship with her during my last visit. We were very fond of each other even though she was almost my mother's age. She called me “Ma Moni” (jewel of a daughter), and I called her “Jati Masi” (Aunty). When she heard that I was to remain in the Ashram, and of the Mother's instruction not to inform my mother of it, she thought the matter over, and then told me I had better inform my mother all the same. Young as I was, I listened to her, forgetting the Mother's advice. This disastrous mistake brought about the greatest tragedy of my life.

As soon as my mother received my letter, she set out for Pondicherry with the intention of taking me back. She stayed with us for only one night and the next day shifted to a hotel. She did her best to persuade me to leave, but I remained adamant. The situation was reported to the Mother. Meanwhile, the dilemma increased. My uncle did not know what to do, but seemed to favour my mother's point of view. In the midst of the commotion and turmoil, Nolini-da came to our house and in front of my uncle said that he had come at the instance of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo because they had wished to know why exactly I

wanted to stay in the Ashram. At this, my uncle asked me, "Do you know anything about yoga? Can you practise Sri Aurobindo's yoga?"

"No," I answered.

"Then why do you want to stay?"

"Because I love Sri Aurobindo."

My uncle seemed taken aback. Nolini-da simply replied, "It is enough; I will tell Mother about it." The Mother finally said, "Let her stay."

What happened next was such a perfidy and a sacrilege as to be almost unthinkable. My mother, after every persuasion of hers had failed, took the last drastic step: she filed a lawsuit with the French court against my uncle. She had been instigated to this course of action by a distant relative who happened to be an influential officer under the French Government in Chandernagar, and who had no love for the Ashram. The charge filed was that I was a minor who was being held back by my uncle so that he might take possession of my property. My uncle was shocked beyond belief. Though I do not remember clearly, I think he had to appear in court, but in the end inevitably lost the case. So I had to go. The only saving grace of the whole affair was that the Ashram had not been involved.

Now I tried in my childish way to avoid leaving. I cried and cried. I played hide-and-seek with the police, concealing myself here and there, first under Sahana Aunty's bed, then under the staircase of the Ashram building. But I was discovered there, and Sri Aurobindo sent word that I should go. The Mother added that otherwise the police would enter the Ashram main building, so at last I had to yield. My uncle showered affection on me and with many caresses bade me farewell.

Thus I became the unwilling victim of a terrible sacrifice that cut me off from the Ashram for many, many years. Had it not been for the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's loving guidance through my long and unhappy career, I believe I would have succumbed long ago.

What lay before me as a minor of thirteen was a vast unknown world, with none to guide me except my mother, who had understandably adopted a hostile attitude towards me and was, herself, quite inexperienced in worldly affairs.

I must, however, add that she and her ill-advised accomplice paid dearly for their act of perfidy.

I suffered a complete banishment from the Ashram for about twelve years. Only uncle's visit now and then brought a new breath of life. When I was able to renew my contact in 1949, I was already a married woman and the mother of a child. And it took me about another 35 years to get a permanent nook in Pondicherry.

(To be continued)

THE MOTHER TONGUE

HOW LINGUISTS HAVE RECONSTRUCTED THE ANCESTOR OF ALL LIVING LANGUAGES

by Vitaly Shevoroshkin

Vitaly Shevoroshkin is a professor of linguistics and Slavic studies at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He is coauthor, with John Woodford, of a forthcoming book on the mother tongue. We reproduce his fascinating article with acknowledgments to The Sciences, May/June 1990, pp. 20-27.

1

THE modern metropolis is a vast, luxuriant polyglot, a confusion of patois, dialect, pidgin and jaberwocky chattering just below the superficial tidiness of the official tongue. To be perfectly fluent on the streets of New York City, for instance, one would have to master literally hundreds of languages—perhaps as many as half the languages in the world. Urban communication has not always been so complicated. According to the Old Testament, early inhabitants of the earth, the ancient Babylonians, were all “of one language, and of one speech.” Sharing this common ground, they decided to make a name for themselves by building a city with a tower reaching to heaven; their plan so offended God, though, that he stirred up linguistic confusion among the tradesmen. Unable to communicate, the workers halted construction, whereupon the Babylonians were scattered across the face of the earth, left to wallow in and to proliferate their linguistic chaos. Forever after, their failed citadel took its name from the Hebrew *balal*, meaning to confuse: “Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth.”

In fact the diversity of the world’s languages was caused by something far less melodramatic than divine intervention. All language, the medium of human activity par excellence, reflects the social creativity of the street through its own ceaseless, buzzing state of flux. As a language passes from one generation to the next, its sounds drift apart and bump together like floor brokers at the stock exchange. Londoners, for example, often shudder at the “sloppiness” of the American pronunciation of words such as *attitude* and *continental*. New words pass into the local vocabulary: foreign phrases, such as *joie de vivre*; schoolyard terms that children learn to shock their parents: coinages minted with prefixes or suffixes that freely combine, such as *-nik*, as in *beatnik* or *peacenik*, and *-gate*, as in *Watergate* or *Koreagate*.

After a century or two of such cacophonous growth, communities become

distinguishable by the dialects they speak: Southern drawl, cockney and Brooklynese. If such dialects are isolated long enough—about 1,500 years, give or take a few centuries—they can develop into distinct languages, each one unintelligible to the speakers of the others. Dialects and languages can disappear too: many indigenous tongues are in danger of extinction as once isolated communities are thrust into an increasingly English-speaking world and as children abandon the once proud linguistic heritage of their parents and embrace the *lingua franca* of their surrounding economy.

In short, every language has its own history. The process of change gives rise to a genealogical structure, a “family tree” that relates languages as sister to sister, cousin to cousin, descendant to common ancestor. French, Italian and Spanish are clearly variations on a theme, as any aficionado of *café au lait*, *caffé latte* or *café con leche* can attest. These three, along with Portuguese, Romanian and a few others, are known as the Romance languages, because they all descend from Vulgar Latin, the spoken language of the Roman Empire.

Possessed of written texts from various mother and daughter languages, the historical linguist can construct the genealogy in a relatively straightforward way. But the historical linguist is an archaeologist of sorts too: even if no written record of Latin existed, for example, an able scholar could likely reconstruct much of that language solely on the basis of a knowledge of its Romance descendants. The same changes that gave rise to the French, Italian and Spanish words for milk—*lait*, *latte* and *leche* (from the Latin *lacte*)—are apparent in the respective terms for the number eight: *huit*, *otto* and *ocho*, which derive from the Latin *octo*.

Similar methods of reconstruction are particularly useful for studying languages that have fallen out of the written record—or for which no written record ever existed. Linguists have been able to reconstruct the ancestral language of Danish, Dutch, English, German, Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish and the extinct Gothic, for which there is only one extant text. Teutonic, the protolanguage for this group, is thought to have been spoken more than 3,000 years ago. Similarly, study of the nearly extinct Celtic languages—Breton, Cornish, Gaelic, Irish and Welsh—has led to the reconstruction of the ancestral proto-Celtic, or simply Celtic, spoken at roughly the same time as Teutonic.

Through comparative study of modern languages, historical linguists have reconstructed other protolanguages from the pre-Roman era. Contemporary Lithuanian and Latvian, for example, are offshoots of the ancient Baltic. Slavic gave rise to Bulgarian, Czech, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian and several other tongues. Indic and Iranian each spawned some twenty languages now spoken in India and the Middle East. And all these ancient languages—Celtic, Baltic, Slavic, Indic and Iranian—have been shown to be kin to Teutonic as well as to Italic, the ancestor of Latin. These seven, and a few others, are classified as one family of languages, the Indo-European, all descended from an ancestral

language spoken almost 8,000 years ago.

Thus not only the history but the prehistory of languages can be examined. And that raises an intriguing question: Is it possible to trace the limbs of the tree of languages all the way back to the trunk, to the single, mythical language of Babel, which begat all modern tongues? Two linguists, working independently, already have reconstructed ancient Nostratic (from the Latin *noster*, meaning ours). Spoken 14,000 years ago, it links the Indo-European protolanguage with language families encompassing the Near East and northern Asia. But now a group of scholars believe they have taken the final step. By painstaking comparison of Nostratic with the ancestral languages of Africa, Southeast Asia, Australia and the Americas, they believe they have partially reconstructed human language as it was first uttered nearly 100,000 years ago. Buttressed by findings in archaeology and genetics, the study of this mother tongue offers unique insight into the remote past of humankind.

Among the first to embrace the notion of linguistic change was William Jones, an English judge stationed in Calcutta, India, at the end of the eighteenth century. Although trained in law, Jones spent much of his time comparing roots and suffixes of Sanskrit, the classical language of India, with cognates, or related words, from other languages—the Sanskrit *bhratar*, meaning brother, with the Gothic *brothar*, the Greek *phrater* and the Latin *frater*. In 1786, speaking before the Bengal Asiatic Society, Jones announced his startling conclusion: Sanskrit, Greek and Latin were sister languages, all three having “sprung from some common source which, perhaps, no longer exists.” Jones further speculated that Celtic and Germanic might also have derived from the same prehistoric ancestor.

Jones’s conclusion set the stage for an intense examination of the relations between what are now called the Indo-European languages. In 1816 the German linguist Franz Bopp corroborated Jones’s suggestion that Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and Germanic were related, and he added Persian to the list of siblings. Two years later the young Danish scholar Rasmus Kristian Rask showed that Baltic and Slavic could be included as well.

Rask also set forth a number of guidelines for the comparative study of languages. Most important, he wrote, any conclusion about a relation between two languages should be based not on a mere handful of convenient resemblances but on a methodical examination of their entire structures. He also pointed out that languages spoken in geographic proximity exchange an almost limitless number of words; consequently the scholar should be wary of an apparent sameness due actually to borrowing and not to relationship. The word *café*, it turns out, would be of no help to the modern linguist seeking to link the Romance languages to Latin, since coffee did not exist in Roman times. The beverage was first brewed in southern Arabia in the fifteenth century and was not officially christianized, by Pope Clement VIII, for another two centuries.

The laws of linguistic change were codified most significantly by Jacob

Grimm, a German linguist best known as the coauthor, with his brother Wilhelm, of *Cinderella*, *Snow White* and dozens of other dark fairy tales. In 1822 Grimm, following up on Rask's work, demonstrated a number of systematic correspondences between the sounds of Germanic words and the sounds of their cognates in the other Indo-European tongues. Where a Gothic word had an *f*, as in *fōtus*, meaning foot, Sanskrit, Greek and Latin often used a *p*: *padás*, *podos*, *pedis*, respectively. Similarly, where the *p* appeared in Gothic words, the non-Germanic languages substituted a *b*; and where the former had a *b*, the latter used what Grimm called aspirates: *bh* in Sanskrit, *ph* in Greek, *f* in Latin. By meticulously employing Grimm's method, other scholars were able to display further correspondences of sounds between other languages and expanded the "genetic tree" of Indo-European languages to include branches for Armenian and Albanian.

By the end of the nineteenth century the methods of Jones, Bopp, Rask and Grimm were enabling linguists to reconstruct words of the parent Indo-European language. Compare several cognates of the word *ten*: the Sanskrit *daśa*, the Greek *déka*, the Latin *decem*, the Gothic *taihun*. Only in the Gothic does the *d* sound not appear. Since it seemed much more likely that the *d* changed to a *t* in this language, rather than that the reverse took place in all the others, linguists assumed that the word for ten in the common antecedent language, proto-Indo-European, also began with *d*. After further scrutinizing the regular shifts of both vowel and consonant sounds between the various language branches, scholars established that the original proto-Indo-European cognate for ten was *dek̑m*.

Of course, to deduce the "sound laws" that make the reconstruction of even a single word of a protolanguage possible, one must compare hundreds of words in detail and have a working knowledge of several grammars. In spite of such obstacles scholars have managed to fill a dictionary with more than 2,000 words reconstructed from the ancient Indo-European language.

2

Scarcely had proto-Indo-European been established when linguists began to point out resemblances between it and other, non-Indo-European families. As early as 1903 Holger Pedersen, a leading Danish linguist, asserted that Indo-European was distantly related to such protolanguages as Uralic—which links Finnish, Hungarian and several languages in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—and Semitic, the ancestor of Arabic and Hebrew. Pedersen methodically compared a number of relatively stable words, such as *I*, *me*, *thou*, *who*, *no* and *what*, most likely to have been inherited from a parent language. The grammatical structures of these words were so strikingly similar that Pedersen postulated the single, encompassing linguistic phylum Nostratic. Nostratic included a number of language families: Afro-Asiatic (which includes Semitic),

the Altaic languages of eastern Asia, such as Japanese, Korean and Turkic; Uralic; and Indo-European

Several decades later Bjorn Collinder, a Swedish expert in Uralic languages, added several other related words to Pedersen's list. In spite of the apparent corroboration Pedersen's Nostratic phylum remained hypothetical; citing a scarcity of linguistic material, Pedersen was unable to reconstruct the common ancestral tongue.

Real evidence for Nostratic emerged only in 1964, when two Soviet scholars, Vladislav Illich-Svitych and Aaron Dolgopolsky, independently published reconstructions of the Nostratic protolanguage. Like Pedersen, both Illich-Svitych and Dolgopolsky focused on the most stable terms: personal pronouns; words for body parts, such as *heart*, *tooth* and *fangernail*; and references to natural objects, such as the sun and the moon. Studying hundreds of such terms from the six families born from Nostratic, each scholar discovered scores of exact sound correspondences. Comparison of cognates for such words as *dark*, including the Indo-European *tem*, the Uralic *tum*, and the Afro-Asiatic *ttum* shows that the Indo-European *t* sound manifests itself as *t* in Uralic, *th* in the Atlantic protolanguage, and *tt* in Afro-Asiatic and Kartvelian, a protolanguage from western Asia. (The *tt* represents a glottal *t* sound, pronounced with a stricture in the throat.) The correspondences noted by the Soviet scholars covered every sound, both consonant and vowel, of every word under scrutiny.

On the basis of such correspondences, Illich-Svitych and Dolgopolsky each managed to reconstruct several hundred words of Nostratic. The Nostratic word for I was found, not altogether coincidentally, to be *mi*, which took the forms *mi* and *me* in Kartvelian, *me* in Indo-European and *mi* (later *bi*) in Altaic. More interesting is the Nostratic *majra*, or young man, which in French became *mari*, or husband, and in English simply *marry*.

As does any language, Nostratic sheds a great deal of light on the lives of its speakers. The Nostrates were mainly hunter-gatherers, such words as *haya*, which meant to pursue game for several days, figure prominently in their vocabulary. (A similar meaning was passed on to daughter languages, as in the Indo-European *hay*, which meant to pursue, and the Altaic and Uralic *aya*, which referred to travel, a long march or a hunt of some kind.) Nevertheless, terms for dwelling and wattle also suggest that villages were established in times of bounty. Archaeological findings confirm that the basic foundations of the time, such as the foundations of fences and walls, were built with mats of twigs or branches covered with mud.

Of the hundreds of reconstructed Nostratic words, though, not one refers to a domesticated plant. Hence the Nostrates were probably unfamiliar with agriculture. The only reference to domesticated animals is the word *kkuyna*, which can be translated either as wolf or as dog; with time the glottal *k* softened to an *h* in the Germanic languages, as in the English *hound*. The dual meaning of

the Nostratic term suggests that the Nostrates were still domesticating wolves. On the basis of the date given to the oldest known bones of dogs, recently unearthed in the same region, the 14,000-year-old pedigree of Nostratic was confirmed.

Nostratic began to fragment into dialects and daughter languages about 13,000 years ago. Within two millennia, the Afro-Asiatic protolanguage was being spoken in the territories of Syria and Palestine by a people archaeologists have identified as the Natufians. Judging solely from their lexicon, it appears the Natufians were relatively advanced: they built fortified structures from stone; they cultivated land, raised cattle and hunted with bow and arrow, a technology the Nostrates had not possessed. The Natufians also developed a market system, evident in the existence of words for buy, sell and price, and they waged war on (*kth*) and raided (*ghwar*) their neighbors. Prehistoric poets—or perhaps lawyers—were known for their ability to “draw magic signs on sand.” There were even Natufian haves and have-nots: the rich, who owned *w-s-r*, or expensive things; those who *s-r-kk*, or stole; and others who made a living by pawning stolen goods. (A hyphen indicates the presence of an undetermined vowel: *a, i* or *u*.) Archaeologists have since discovered many of the artifacts that linguists had indicated should exist: animal bones, remnants of dwellings and even flint-bladed sickles for harvesting crops.

By 9,000 years ago Afro-Asiatic had splintered into its own daughter languages, including proto-Semitic, spoken by a highly cultured society in the same regions of the Middle East. Many terms of cultural significance were borrowed from the Semitic by neighboring languages—and among the borrowers, as Illich-Svitych pointed out in the mid-1960s, was Indo-European. Although this finding directly contradicted the widespread belief that Indo-Europeans lived far to the north, closer to the Baltic Sea, the Indo-European words for goal, *ghaid*, and boat, *nau*, seemed clearly to have been derived from the Semitic cognates *gady-* and *naw*. Indo-Europeans also appear to have learned about the axe, the millstone, ale and ritual sacrifice from the ancient Semites.

On the basis of these and other borrowed words, Illich-Svitych and Dolgopolsky deduced that early Indo-Europeans most likely inhabited the neighboring region of Anatolia, where Turkey now lies. Just three years ago the archaeologist Colin Renfrew of Cambridge University, working without knowledge of the Soviet research (translated only recently from the Russian), linked the Indo-European language to an urban culture, Çatal Huyük, known to have existed about eighty-five centuries ago in the Anatolian region.

Further traces of linguistic borrowing indicate that the Indo-Europeans later split into two branches. One remained in Anatolia, giving rise to the Hittite Empire about 4,000 years ago. The second expanded into the Balkan region. The latter, western branch already spoke a few dialects, which, by the end of the

migration had become languages in their own right. By 5,000 years ago speakers of Baltic, Celtic, Germanic and Slavic protolanguages had settled in north-western Europe, and Greek and Italic were flourishing in the Mediterranean basin. The Indo-Iranians migrated northeast, past the Black and Caspian seas, before heading southeast, into Persia and India, exchanging bits of language along the way. Other Nostratic dialects had already branched farther eastward, later developing into proto-Altaic, proto-Uralic and proto-Dravidian and its daughters in India.

3

Linguists around the world have reconstructed other, equally ancient protolanguages that lie entirely outside the Nostratic phylum. In the mid-1970s Sergei Starostin, a Soviet scholar and former pupil of Dolgopolsky's, identified North Caucasian, a protolanguage that links a number of disparate languages scattered across Eurasia. Etruscan, the non-Indo-European language spoken in Italy some 2,500 years ago, fitted into the North Caucasian family. So did Sumerian, discovered in Mesopotamia on 5,000-year-old clay tablets and thought to be the first written language. The reconstruction of proto-North Caucasian cleared up the origins of a few modern languages as well, including Basque, an isolated language found on the border of France and Spain that bears no resemblance to either of its Romance neighbors. Linguists speculate that Basque speakers migrated from Asia Minor nearly 4,000 years ago.

Starostin's study also confirmed that Anatolia was the homeland of the Indo-Europeans. About 7,000 years ago, he documented, Indo-Europeans borrowed a massive number of words from the North Caucasian vocabulary—about five times as many words as were borrowed from the Semitic. Contrary to Renfrew's assertion, it now seems the civilization of Çatal Hüyük was founded not by Indo-Europeans but by the North Caucasian peoples; the Indo-Europeans migrated there during a much later period.

But Starostin pushed his studies even further back in time. In a 1982 paper he compared the reconstructed North Caucasian language with two other protolanguages: Sino-Tibetan, the ancestor of numerous Asian languages, including Chinese; and Yeniseian, once spoken along the Yenisei River in western Siberia and survived only by two contemporary languages, Ket and Yug. After an extensive comparison of the three protolanguages, Starostin concluded that all are related. He called the new phylum Sino-Caucasian and, with his colleague Sergei Nikolaev, quickly worked to reconstruct the parent language. Like Nostratic, Sino-Caucasian was a tribal language spoken some 14,000 years ago.

During roughly the same period as Starostin's work, other scholars were grouping the native languages of North America into equally ancient phyla. In

his 1987 book, *Language in the Americas*. the Stanford University linguist Joseph Greenberg argued that most Native American languages belong to a large phylum he named Amerind. Some scholars criticized Greenberg for the seemingly arbitrary comparison of words that sound similar in native tongues but that have largely different meanings, such as the terms for feces, night and grass. But Greenberg's analysis was far from capricious. All three terms are derived from the original Amerind word for dirt; with time the word came to mean dirty, as in excrement, and later simply dark. The term subsequently took on specific color connotations, such as black (a reference to night), blue and in some languages green—the color of grass. In a preliminary study Merritt Ruhlen, a colleague of Greenberg's, has reconstructed roughly 300 Amerind words.

A protolanguage cannot be reconstructed on a purely geographic basis, however. For example, a group of North American languages called Na-dene does not belong to the Amerind category. Rather, they are more closely related to the Sino-Caucasian languages, and together the two groups make up a new phylum called Dene-Caucasian. As became clear quite recently, this phylum also includes Algonquian, Salishan, Wakashan and other languages of the Great Lakes region originally considered Amerind languages.

By examining the linguistic irregularities of Na-dene, a number of scholars have concluded that its speakers made up one of several distinct waves of people to migrate to North America from northeastern Siberia. The Amerinds, an early wave, crossed into Alaska some 12,000 years ago via a now submerged land bridge. In the centuries that followed they migrated southward, in time populating South America. About 3,000 years later the Na-dene arrived and populated Alaska and northwestern Canada. The last to arrive, about 6,000 years ago, were the Eskimo-Aleutians, who spoke a language akin to Altaic, a Nostratic language and thus related to Dravidian, Uralic and the rest. Their relatives still inhabit northern Siberia.

Numerous scholars who study the distant genetic relations between languages now agree that these protolanguages are interrelated. When the reconstructed words of Nostratic, Dene-Caucasian and Amerind are compared, basic terms are often similar, and occasionally identical, in structure. The Nostratic *lapa*, for instance, meaning leaf, resembles the Dene-Caucasian *Lapa* and the Amerind *dap* or *Lap* (the capital *L* denotes a glottal sound, such as *tl* pronounced rapidly). Likewise the Amerind words for woman, *kuni* and *kuna*, are nearly identical to the Nostratic *kūni*; the English *queen* is a modern relative. Linguists have noted hundreds of other striking similarities between basic words.

These three phyla are clearly related to other, ancient protolanguages of the world as well. The Czech linguist Václav Blažek has studied the relations between Nostratic, Dene-Caucasian, Amerind, proto-Australian and the Austro-Asiatic protolanguage, which gave rise to various languages in Southeast Asia. Blažek's studies have included the Congo-Saharan phylum, which encompasses

hundreds of modern languages spoken throughout central and southern Africa; Austronesian, whose daughter languages are spoken in Indonesia, the Philippines and many other Pacific islands; and the Thai languages. (The Austro-Asiatic, Austronesian and Thai languages make up the Austric phylum.) The Khoisan languages of the Hottentots, the Bushmen and other tribes of southern Africa constitute the oldest phylum of them all.

The implications of interphyletic comparisons are enormous. That such abundant similarities exist between such disparate language groups strongly suggests that all descend from a common linguistic parent. Using the same comparative techniques, linguists are now reconstructing what appears to be the grand ancestor of all languages: the mother tongue of humankind.

As with past reconstructions, the reconstruction of the language scholars call proto-World is done by comparing the most stable words of the different vocabularies—*I, thou*, terms for nature and the like—and revealing the sound shifts that generated the variations in pronunciation. Whenever possible, the vocabularies under study should belong to phyletic protolanguages, such as Nostratic, Sino-Caucasian or Austric. Yet in some cases more modern vocabularies can suffice; no reconstruction of proto-Khoisan exists, for example, but contemporary Khoisan languages are so much alike that preliminary comparisons with the other phyla are possible. Some critics, of course, consider comparisons between proto-protolanguages and reconstruction based on reconstruction to be a rather dubious affair. But strict criteria ensure that the correspondences follow exact phonetic rules governing both the sound shifts between the ancient protolanguages and those between the daughter languages of each phylum.

Computer technology—which ten years ago few linguists understood—adds a further stamp of legitimacy to the study of the oldest protolanguages. The computer can store a data base that includes thousands of cognates of many words, and it can then generate precise algorithms for mapping the correspondences of vowel and consonant sounds between the phyletic languages. Those correspondences, in turn, make it possible to reconstruct the mother tongue, proto-World. A comparison of cognates for the word *tooth*, such as the Congo-Saharan *nigi*, the Austro-Asiatic *gini*, the Sino-Caucasian *gin*, and the Nostratic variants *nigi* and *gini* (predecessors of the English *nag* and *gnaw*), indicates that the proto-World terms were *nigi* and *gini*. Similarly, the English *tell* originates from the proto-World terms *tal*, and later *dal*, meaning tongue. So far linguists have been able to reconstruct between 150 and 200 words from the proto-World lexicon.

More difficult than reconstructing the mother tongue has been the task of accurately dating its inception. Early estimates placed the protolanguage in the Near East about 35,000 years ago, because that allows enough time for the Nostratic, Sino-Caucasian, Australian, Indo-Pacific, Austric and Amerind

languages to have spread to the many corners of the globe in which they came to be found. Scientists who study ancient human settlements, for instance, know that several groups migrated to Australia, the last about 20,000 years ago.

That the reconstructed language was exceedingly old, however, did not necessarily make it the oldest. Perhaps other languages existed at the same time but were later abandoned for the newer languages being brought from the Near East 35,000 years ago. Admittedly that possibility would imply that languages as remote as Khoisan, in southern Africa, had been introduced by outsiders. But without some sort of evidence indicating that proto-World was even older than the 35,000-year estimate, linguists could not say definitively that it was the only, much less the first, human language to arise.

The question has been resolved, oddly enough, by discoveries from outside the field of linguistics. By measuring the frequency with which key strands of DNA appear in African, Asian, European and other populations, geneticists can measure the extent to which these geographically dispersed peoples are genetically related; the less similar their DNA, the further back along the phylogenetic tree one must go to find their common human ancestor. Two studies, one in 1987 headed by Rebecca L. Cann of the University of Hawaii at Manoa, the other published in 1988 by the Stanford University geneticist Luigi Luca Cavalli-Sforza and his colleagues, strongly indicate that modern humans, *Homo sapiens*, have a single and discrete African origin.

More important, the migratory paths of the early humans conform strikingly with the branching of human languages. The Khoisan-speaking peoples are the most genetically distant and thus appear to have been the first group to split from the original population of *H. sapiens*. This would explain why the Khoisan languages, though they share basic words with other phyla, are the least similar. A second split divided the rest of the population into speakers of Congo-Saharan, which gave rise to the languages of central and northern Africa, and those who migrated farther north and into the Near East. Descendants of the latter group, as archaeologists have shown, populated the remaining continents of the globe.

In short, all evidence suggests that the reconstructed proto-World was the language of the first *H. sapiens*, humans essentially indistinguishable from ourselves. How long ago was this first language spoken? The crucial piece of evidence was discovered by archaeologists in Israel who recently analyzed the teeth of the oldest known *H. sapiens*: they were 92,000 years old. As it must have taken millennia for descendants of the first African *H. sapiens* to reach this region, proto-World, the language of the first humans, must be close to 100,000 years old.

Naturally, proto-World was a rather basic language. The most common term was, as it is today, the word for I, *nagai*, followed by the word for two. *Dual* later became a grammatical category of its own, referring to eyes, arms, legs,

parents and other items that come in pairs. Only a few modern languages retain that feature; in Russian, for instance, the *a* ending refers to items that come only in pairs, such as *glaza*, eyes; *roga*, horns; and *berrega*, riverbanks. Among the most accurately reconstructed words are those for body parts—*eye*, *ear*, *finger*, *heart* and even *nihwa* and *hwina*, terms referring at once to blood, breath and life. Fleas, lice and in-laws were also common topics of discussion among early humans. Curiously, no words in proto-World, or even in Nostratic of the other ancient protolanguages, refer specifically to emotions—which does not mean early humans had none, only that they apparently felt no burning desire to express them. Besides, a simpler word can still convey qualitative judgment: the English *love* has its origin in the Nostratic *luba*, which meant thirsty.

In general, language evolved from the simple to the complex. In the earliest state of our language, consonants were the sole bearers of meaning: words such as *changa* and *sanga* meant, at once, nose, odor and the act of smelling. Apparently there was only one vowel, *a*, produced naturally when consonants were pronounced. Variations later developed in the proto-World language (*a* was pronounced *ɪ* or *u* in some forms) and these vowel phonemes became a means of distinguishing between words with different meanings. The proto-World *changa* referred to odor, or what the *changa* detects. With time vowels became bearers of meaning as well and helped create other verbs from nouns—*see* from *eye*, *hear* from *ear*, *burn* from *fire*—and so early grammar was born. Some linguists speculate that change in the sounds was associated with a slow change in the structure of human vocal cords: from that of hominids incapable of making vocal distinctions between *u* and *i*, to that of humans more like us, capable of clearly pronouncing three vowels and a large array of complex consonants, such as *ng* and *tl*.

Without question, linguists still must substantially strengthen the case for proto-World before it can become widely accepted by the scientific community. But there is no doubt that the tools developed for reconstruction and comparative studies can provide invaluable insight into the origin, development and diffusion of the earth's peoples. What the poets say, it seems, is true: language is indeed a window on the world.

LEXIS IN ROBERT FROST'S "FIRE AND ICE"

A STYLISTIC APPROACH

LEXIS occupies a central position in pedagogical stylistics since the teacher normally starts his explication from the lexical level of a text. Lexis has two major aspects: the denotative and the connotative. Dictionaries tell us very little directly about the connotative potential of lexical items. Only this connotative aspect of lexis is chiefly exploited in literary texts by imaginative writers. We have many words for repeated and shared experiences but few for the extraordinary. The writer's problem is not to describe, for one cannot describe something unique or so far unstated, but to trick the reader into having a similar experience, entering into a similar intellectual/emotional/intuitive/sensory experience. One way to do this is to use words that suggest more than one context.

Polysemy, synonymy, antonymy, collocation, collocational range and lexical deviations are all part of the analysis of lexis. The more tightly clustered the words pointing to a single context, the more clearly defined the field of meaning. Technical writing of any kind shows this density of field. Poetry tends to suggest or refer to many fields, often simultaneously, and hence its complexity.

Fire and Ice

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

The choice of lexical items speaks of the poet's vision and originality in expression in no uncertain terms. The title 'FIRE AND ICE' itself is foregrounded in order to spell out the theme of the poem. The fact that the lexical items *Fire* and *Ice* are balanced by a connective *and* suggests to us the poet's vision, and the possibilities of exploiting further their connotative aspects that would enhance our appreciation of the poem.

The two elements—*Fire* and *Ice*—form a dichotomy. The poet seems to place one against the other so as to bring out an unusual equation. As long as *fire* and *ice* are under human control, they are good and beneficial. But when they assume monstrous extremes, both can be equally dangerous and disastrous.

There should be a medial point where these two can meet and merge, evolving into a novel phenomenon.

The thematic antithesis can be analysed further in terms of the connotative possibilities of the two lexical items. *Fire* connotes, 'warmth', 'force', 'brilliance' and 'ordeal'. It also functions as a verb (*to give spirit*, *to fill with passion*, or *to become filled with excitement*). Constructions like *He is full of fire*, *His speech is full of fire*, and *He is a fire-brand* can guide us towards our understanding of the above said connotations. Similarly, *ice* connotes 'cold', 'indifference' and 'lack of force', and it functions as a verb as well. Both *fire* and *ice* thus have a dual grammatical function, and this corresponds to the duality of the poetic theme.

By extension of meaning, we get:

Fire = [+ warmth]

Ice = [- warmth]

The human body has [+ warmth] and [- warmth] in suitable proportions, and existence is thus made possible and is controlled by them. The human body embodies the harmony of the opposites and consequently the essence of existence,

i.e., [+ warmth] + [- warmth] = the human body.

The title seems to imply the suggestion that existence is possible only at a point in between the extreme levels of *fire* and *ice*.

DEATH ← FIRE – existence – ICE → DEATH = fire + ice

The title also suggests that excessive force and enthusiasm would be as dangerous as passive cold and indifference.

The very linguistic structure of the title 'Fire and Ice' seems to imply the theme.

'Fire destroys life on earth.'

'Ice destroys life on earth.'

Though 'fire' and 'ice' have opposing physical properties, they are here equated with each other in respect of their function:

Fire

causes destruction.

Ice

The bond established by *and* explains the logical equation and the theme of the poem.

Fire = Ice

The linguistic arrangement of lexis in the title 'Fire and Ice' explains these three concepts:

1) Fire [+ warmth] + Ice [- warmth] = the human body

2) [FIRE (existence) ICE] = the human life. i.e., the human life is conditioned by both these elemental forces.

3) Fire = Ice.

The first two are on a less superficial (symbolic or connotative) level, but the third is clear on the surface (formal or literal) level as the poetic lines literally point out the same idea of the poet. If the poet had chosen some other lexical items for the title, for example, 'FIRE OR ICE' or 'THE DESTROYER' or 'DESTRUCTION' or 'THE END', it would not have had such a rich scope for interpretation as the title 'FIRE AND ICE'

Another pair of lexical items in the text—*desire* and *hate*—forms a parallel dichotomy: they are semantically opposites, but when taken together present a wholesome view; life is a combination of both love (= desire) and hatred (= hate). These two are, after all, common human qualities. The antithetical quality of these lexical items reflects human nature: 'desire' and 'hate', being the *dramatis personae*, enact the human drama throughout one's existence; man is torn between 'fire' (= flame = spirit = desire) and 'ice' (= cold = bitter = hate). Thus the two dichotomies—'fire'/'ice', 'desire'/'hate'—seem to be thematically interrelated and complement each other in enhancing the poetic vision.

Intuitively we can trace out a few more lexical sets in the poem. The collocates of 'fire' can be 'desire'/'hold'/'favour'. 'Ice' has the collocate 'hate'. A third lexical set is comparable to those two lexical sets, and appears to dominate over them since they are almost uniformly spread out in the poem in the following order:

end
perish
destruction

How far the choice of words enables the poet to give expression to his 'felt experience' in the fullest measure can be understood from a study of two more lexical items: *hold* and *also*. The lexical item *hold* as such is ambiguous. It can be a noun as well as a verb. It has a wide collocational range and its range overlaps many other collocational ranges. For example, as a noun, it is polysemous: 'the act of grasping', 'a grasp', 'a clutch', 'a support', 'moral influence', 'custody', 'a refuge', etc. Again, as a verb it means several things: '(to) grasp', '(to) keep in', '(to) enclose', '(to) restrain', '(to) keep in a certain position', '(to) retain control of', '(to) occupy', '(to) believe', '(to) maintain', '(to) judge', '(to) carry', '(to) celebrate' and also intransitively, '(to) adhere (to)', '(to) be valid', '(to) be fit', '(to) stop', etc.

In the poetic context, *hold* suggests the poet's holding of something, say, an opinion. The poet has first-hand experience of 'fire' since he has 'tasted of desire', and this emphasis is revealed in the assertive lexical item:

'I hold with those who favor fire.'

The suggestive nature of the verb *hold* gets expanded so as to widen the horizon of the reader's comprehension. The assertive nature of the poet's statement is revealed as well. The choice of the verb seems to be the most appropriate one concurrent with the theme of the poem.

But his 'ice'-proposition is hypothetical in contrast with his practical, full-blooded 'fire'-experience. He does not appear to have experienced as much of 'ice' as of 'fire'. That is why, he chooses his words with great caution:

'I think I know....'

The lexical item *also* in the eighth line hints at a logical syllogism that appears to be the basic structure of the poem. The poet seems to have constructed the poem just as a logician constructs an argument. The poem has a perfect logical symmetry:

- a) Some say the world will end in fire
 — Major Premise (1.1)
From what I've tasted of desire
 — Minor Premise (1.3)
I hold with those who favor fire.
 — Conclusion (1.4)
- b) Some say (the world will end) in ice
 — Major Premise (1.2)
I think I know enough of hate
 — Minor Premise (1.6)
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great — Conclusion (11.7-9)
And would suffice.

a) Conclusion: Fire destroys the world.

b) Conclusion: Ice destroys the world.

The final logical conclusion thereby obtained is:

Fire = Ice

This conclusion is explicitly and remarkably embodied in the lexical item *also* which equates 'Ice' with 'Fire'.

Fire is great

Ice is *also* great

And again we arrive at the same conclusion:

Fire = Ice

There are lexical and syntactic repetitions. The lexical item *fire* is twice repeated; so also *ice*. The pronoun *I* is repeated four times: two in favour of *fire*, and two in favour of *ice*. Such arrangements go to strengthen the poet's point of view that in destruction, as in a mathematical formula,

Fire = Ice

The syntactic string consisting of two lexical items *some say* is verbally repeated twice: once for *fire* and the second time for *ice*. The poet employs a common poetic licence (*i.e.*, reduction of sentence structure), and we perceive that the syntactic construction of the first line is repeated in the second line:

Some say the world will end in fire.

Some [say the world will end] in ice.

The last syllable of the poem i e., '-FICE' seems to suggest the ultimate synthesis of *fire* and *ice*. This is phonologically foregrounded to suggest the view that *fire* can be replaced by *ice* and *vice versa*, and that at one level they are one and the same and hence *fice* in the word *suffice*; it echoes the equal status of *fire* and *ice*, necessary for existence.

D. GNANASEKARAN

THANATOPSIS

DEATH, never to your grip and rooted terror
 Succumbs the central flame
That is, beyond all subsidence and error.
The minions of convention call your name,
 Lapped snug in ignorance
 That glints in a false mirror
 Held in inertia's honored trance;
 To block new vigor and advance
And keep the failure gray of golden dreams
 The rays are broken
 That pulse with rondure that redeems,
Till one forgets divinity has spoken.

Yet, coming full in time blunts this raw pleasure:
 For sounding to accord
Converge the powers that balance in true measure
Above the checkered abstinence and hoard.
 The gulfs and severed lines
 Meet, with immortal treasure
 Freed from the dragon's dark confines:
 While still maturity's designs
Work to the closure's whole consummacy:
 The sharp transcendence
 Fails truth, and wants reality;
The blighted kingdom keeps its old dependence.

Unshadowed in its progress proves the vision,
 Dynamic knowledge sped
To forge the sphere of life with no elision.
The accepted lord of darkness flames ahead:
 Consumed its sustenance,
 His shadow meets decision.
 All clear the web of circumstance
 Is woven in perfection's dance,
Where first and last are one without a seam:
 Here is the glory
 That bows to no diverting beam,
The incorruptible heart of the story.

JESSE ROARKE

THE MYSTERY OF TEARS

CHURNING the complex bewildered being,
From which secret source do you well up, O Tears?
You manifest in many ways...
And diverse are your forms and figures!

When one is betrayed, confused or shocked
Or some sudden calamity befalls,
Your flow gets choked and turns tense,
Only letting the red eyes speak of your presence!

At times you are calm, quiet and sombre
Like a rain-laden cloudy sky.
And drop down slowly on lips pale with pain
Quenching the thirst of the parched eyes!

Often you are seen behind window panes,
Where the forlorn beloved awaits her lover
With the gift of two trays of saddened eyes,
While seeking him against the blue of the sky...

Sometimes you appear as the messenger
Of a mother's stricken heart;
And unburden the dumb sorrow of her soul
For the premature death of her only son!

You are devotion liquified in worshippers,
Absorbed in prayers and meditations
In front of the Idol of a temple,
Thronged with devotees and spectators...

The listless minstrel roams about
Singing the name of Krishna, his deity...
You sprinkle the essence of his ecstasy
And soak the sweet land of Brindaban!

Thus pervading the whole earth and heavens
You hover with enigmatic wings
And pour yourself always and everywhere
In sorrow, song, love, devotion and longing...

O deluding Tears, piercing your magic mesh
I have set forth for the abode of the Eternal,
In the depth of whose vast bosom
You exhaust yourself in streams of nectar...

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

SRI AUROBINDO AS TEACHER

SRI AUROBINDO MEMORIAL LECTURE DELIVERED AT BARODA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

On October 1st, 1990

By Dr. Chamanlal L. Gupta

Professor of Applied Sciences, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry

Mr. Chairman,

Friends of Sri Aurobindo Nivas and other Centres in Gujarat, distinguished residents of Baroda, my scientist friends, ladies and gentlemen!

You have accorded me a great privilege in asking me to deliver this annual lecture instituted by your city to honour Sri Aurobindo, who practically came to his Indian roots here in 1893. He came straight to Baroda from England after fourteen years as a shy and rather reserved young man of twenty-one but full of great promise and many achievements. It was His Highness Sayajirao Gaekwad who 'discovered' him and invited him to join Baroda Service and later the College, which is now an esteemed University. India welcomed him with the descent of a vast calm as soon as he touched her soil at 10.55 A.M. on February 6th, 1893—alighting from SS Carthage at Bombay port and he was in Baroda on February 8th, 1893, just two days later.

As you know, Sri Aurobindo was born in Bengal, educated in England, mastered and taught his Yoga at Pondicherry but his homecoming was at Baroda. In fact, outside Pondicherry, he lived here the longest number of years—thirteen years. All the lines of his future work—educational, literary, revolutionary and yogic—had their beginnings in Baroda. So for me, you all are residents of a holy city to which I have come on a pilgrimage.

To give a lecture on Sri Aurobindo in a scholarly fashion is not within my competence. What I shall do now is only to offer a few flowers at his feet—flowers from the garden planted by him and nurtured by our sweet Mother—his lifelong collaborator. I pray and hope he will deign to accept them in his compassion. I hope too that you will forgive me for any lapses and grant your attention just as you have offered your time by coming here.

I have chosen to speak on the theme 'Sri Aurobindo as Teacher' primarily because I have been a teacher at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education at Pondicherry for twenty years and more. When asked about his life's work, which he succinctly stated as

- 1) Work for India's freedom,
- 2) A new interpretation of the Vedas,
- 3) A new Yoga,

Sri Aurobindo did not include education. However, the Mother did say at

the inauguration of the International University Centre on 6th January 1952 that Sri Aurobindo considered the “establishment of this Education Centre as a most cherished means for the realisation of his ideals.” A perusal of his writings and some anecdotes of his life confirm his lifelong interest in and commitment to education and teaching, even though of a different kind, for he said that “the first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught”. The following lines will elucidate his views of teaching and the role of a teacher:

“As in education of the mind, so in the education of the heart the best way is to put the child into the right road to his own perfection and encourage him to follow it, watching, suggesting, helping, but not interfering.”

Work as Teacher

Sri Aurobindo’s work as teacher could be grouped in four directions, many of them concurrent in time.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>As Professor at College</i> | — February 1897-1901 Baroda |
| With all its classroom teaching, correcting home work, setting and marking papers, Course syllabi, etc. | — January 1904-June 1906 Baroda |
| | — August 1906-August 1907 Calcutta |
| 2. <i>As teacher to the Nation at large</i> —Writing in magazines on issues of the day and his literary works | — <i>Indu Prakash</i> August 7, 1983 to |
| | — <i>Yugantar</i> March 28, 1910 |
| | — <i>Bandemataram</i> |
| | — <i>Karmayogin</i> |
| | — <i>Dharma</i> |
| 3. <i>As Master of Yoga</i> | <i>Arya</i> , August 15, 1914 to January 1921 |
| Most of his major yogic works are in <i>Arya</i> . <i>Letters on Yoga</i> and <i>Savitri</i> came afterwards and <i>The Supramental Manifestation in Bulletin</i> . | <i>Bulletin of Physical Education</i> , February 21, 1949 to November 24, 1950 |

As World Teacher

Without any evangelic propaganda or organised effort, he has been and continues to be the great world teacher, especially if we remind ourselves of what he meant by teaching—teaching is helping the taught to bring out from within him the knowledge, the wisdom, the awakening Consciousness which has been the means of evolution from plant to animal to a thinking human being—human being who according to Sri Aurobindo is capable of hastening his own evolution

to a more-than-human level. Not only is man capable of this progress but responsible for his further evolution which can be obstructed and retarded by his propensity for irresponsible behaviour.

By his own achievements as a human being Sri Aurobindo has made immense riches available today to the earth Consciousness. To tap these riches, these new resources needs effort—individual effort, collective effort—on the part of human beings. Reading, assimilating and practising of the method and discipline Sri Aurobindo has spelled out in his published writings and words is one such obvious method. Becoming a reasoning, discerning, compassionate human being is a step in the same direction pointed by a study of his life, his works, his words. Sri Aurobindo has made available a psychological, spiritual and yet in essential temper scientific approach that can lead us to rapid internal and external progress.

Sri Aurobindo's work as World Teacher still lies in the future: when humanity will be willing to renounce its ego, not search for alibis but surrender itself to the manifesting of the Truth-consciousness for which Sri Aurobindo laboured all his life along with the Mother, who continued his work. Each of these four aspects could occupy much more space and need much more time than the duration of a single lecture. We will try, therefore, to savour as best we can some of the flavour, if we may.

In his Baroda days, the students looked up to him with awe and gave him respect bordering on adoration in spite of his formal classroom manner and absence of any rhetoric. "His exposition of the subject was so lucid and exhaustive that no doubt was left about the meaning of any portion of the text and he inspired confidence in the minds of the students": so commented one student. Another—namely Shri K. M. Munshi (Kulapati of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan later)—said: "To the students of our college, Prof. Ghose was a figure enveloped in mystery. He was reputed to be a poet, a master of many languages and in touch with Russian Nihilists!" In his lectures on literature, he tried to take the students to the roots of the text. Almost a visual picture comes to mind, when one of his students says that Prof. Ghose, sitting in his tiny classroom, like one abstracted, his left hand resting on the desk, his eyes fixed on a point across the room seemed to pour out his deepest thought while teaching Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. He encouraged students to write, stating that 'correct composition leads to correct thinking'. But alas! he too, while correcting their papers, had to comment with such phrases as 'Fit for Standard III' or 'How have you come to the College?' etc. He rarely asked questions but gave assistance when requested. He once enumerated the four objectives of a teacher, which could be summarised as:

1. He should not teach the student but rather help him to teach himself.
2. He should not be concerned with what the student remembers but with what he understands.

3. He should find out if the student is interested in the subject and, if not, create interest

4 He should build the proper environment for learning—not stuff the mind with narrow information but “evoke the intelligence, the character and general power the student needs to find out for himself.”

He deplored the ills of the Indian version of English Education, the best of which he himself had received at St. Paul’s School, London, and King’s College, Cambridge and tried to compensate for its rigid syllabus, examinations and students’ habits of cramming to get more marks rather than understanding—not much different from now—by guiding in extracurricular activities such as the Union (for debating) and the College newspaper. Says Mr Patkar of Baroda: “He was listened to with rapt attention—language flowed like a stream from his lips with natural ease.”

In his message to students and teachers of Bengal National College (now Jadavpur University) in August 1907, he exhorted them as follows:

“There are times in a nation’s history when Providence places before it one work, one aim, to which everything else, however high and noble in itself has to be sacrificed. Such a time has now arrived for our Motherland when nothing is dearer than her service, when everything else is to be directed to that end. If you will study, study for her sake; train yourselves body and mind and soul for her service. You will earn your living that you may live for her sake. You will go abroad to foreign lands that you may bring back knowledge with which you may do service to her. Work that she may prosper. Suffer that she may rejoice. All is contained in this one single advice.”

Sri Aurobindo bade goodbye to being a formal teacher when he resigned from the Principalship of Bengal National College and his memorable address to the students and teachers has been presented above in part.

(To be continued)

AWARD OF PH.D TO MR. VINCENT MERLO

Mr. Vincent Merlo was awarded the Degree of Ph.D. by the University of Valencia, Spain, in September, 1990. His thesis is entitled “The Supramental Reality and the Integral Transformation Theory and Praxis in Sri Aurobindo’s work.” Dr. Merlo was a Government of India scholar and registered with St Xavier’s College, Bombay for formal purposes. He did his active research in Pondicherry under the guidance of Arabinda Basu, Director, Sri Aurobindo Research Academy.

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of December 1990)

THE rationalistic spirit of the age of the Indian Renaissance led to a progressive movement to reform in religion. There were at the beginning of the 19th century numerous social evils left standing partly out of veneration for old customs and partly out of sheer inertia. But the urge of the rationalistic spirit was to declare against religious superstitions which were eating into the vitals of the society. During that period numerous souls were born in India to eradicate the prevailing evils in the Hindu religion. A new spirit worked through Keshab Chandra Sen, who was the founder of the Brahma Samaj and a great social reformer.

The mind of young Indians revolted against the political subjection of India. Western ideas of democracy, freedom and nationalism opened to them fresh vistas of light through the gloom. It turned its attention to the sad political and economical conditions of their countrymen. The result of which was the awakening of a vigilant public life through different organisations, and sabhas (conferences) in different cities, particularly in Calcutta and Bombay.

Dr. Karan Singh says: "... For the first time a reform movement grew from out of the very heart of traditional Hinduism. This could not fail to have deep political repercussions, and we find that many of the great nationalist leaders such as Tilak and Sri Aurobindo were profoundly influenced by Vivekananda. If Rammohan Roy can be described as the intellectual progenitor of the Liberals, Vivekananda is the spiritual progenitor of the Radicals."¹

Dr. Karan Singh says further: "The nineteenth century witnessed a profound renaissance in India, brought about mainly as the result of the British impact. The great social reform leaders and movements—Rammohun Roy and Devendranath Tagore of the Adi Brahma Samaj, Keshab Chandra Sen of the Brahma Samaj of India, Bhandarkar and Ranade of the Prarthana Samaj, Dayananda of the Arya Samaj, Blavatsky and Annie Besant of the Theosophical Society and Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda all combined to bring about an intellectual, social, cultural and spiritual ferment which shook Hindu Society to its depths, and inevitably gave birth to a national movement of political regeneration."²

Tilak and Sri Aurobindo both were upholders of the ancient ideal, the path of self-development both individually and collectively. These prophets therefore impressed upon their countrymen that their first duty was to recover the truth of their national self which freedom alone could give.

In the preceding article we discussed the life and work of Tilak. In this article we shall discuss the family background of Sri Aurobindo. In a later one we shall deal with his life proper. Of course once Sri Aurobindo wrote to a disciple:

“No one can write about my life because it has not been on the surface for men to see.” A. B. Purani explains: “How could one probe into such an inner life—ininitely rich not only in its human content of intellectual, emotional and volitional movements, but filled with many varied spiritual experiences which transcend human consciousness? The movement of ascent of consciousness from the human to the Divine, is accompanied in his case by a descent with that Light and Power into the human instrumentation,—mind, life, and body.” However, it is helpful to observe the movements of the outer existence as they lead towards the inner and as the inner prepares and enters into the outer.

Sri Aurobindo was born in Calcutta on 15th August 1872. He was the third son of Dr. Krishna Dhan Ghose. Dr. K. D. Ghose came from the well-known Ghoses of Konnagar. His father Kaliprasad Ghose was a popular figure in the town, and his mother Kailasbasini Devi was a pious lady devoted to religious pursuits. Krishna Dhan passed the Entrance Examination of Calcutta University in 1885 from the Konnagar High School and joined the Calcutta Medical College. In 1864, while he was a fourth-year student in the latter, aged nineteen, he married Swarnalata, aged twelve, the eldest daughter of Rajnarayan Bose, according to the rites of the Adi Brahma Samaj, which was founded by Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, poet Rabindranath Tagore’s father.

Rajnarayan Bose, a prophetic writer, saw the vision of a free India. For his luminous writings he was called a Rishi (Seer). He was the first to conceive and organise a movement for preparing India for her freedom and greatness. His plan included national fairs for the revival of indigenous arts and crafts and the promotion of Swadeshi. He was the joint product of Vedantic, Islamic and European cultures. He sought to rebuild India’s Culture through her native traditions and his own thought-provoking writings. He knew that freedom was the essential condition to develop a true National Spirit.

In the year 1876 he started a secret society called Sanjivani Sabha (Life-giving Society) in which the poet Rabindranath Tagore and all his family members were included. Devendranath Tagore whole-heartedly supported Rajnarayan Bose’s National Promotion Scheme which the latter had published in 1861. A famous Jatiya Mela (National Gathering) exhibitions were held from 1861 to 1867. These Jatiya Melas are regarded as harbringers of the Indian National Congress which had its first session in 1885.

After completing medical studies in Calcutta Krishna Dhan got his first appointment as an assistant surgeon at Rangpur. In 1869 he left his two sons, Binoybhushan and Manmohan, with his wife and sailed for England in order to take his M.D. degree from Aberdeen University. He returned to India in 1871 and joined the Civil Medical Services. But he returned completely anglicised and an atheist. Still, he became popular for his philanthropic work.

Sri Aurobindo’s mother, Swarnalata Devi, was an educated lady and was

famous for her beauty and cultured bearings. She was known as the Rose of Rangpur. Such were the circumstances when Sri Aurobindo was born.

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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- 1 *Prophet of Indian Nationalism*, by Dr Karan Singh, p 29
- 2 *Ibid* , p 29
- 3 *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, by A B Purani, p v

A WEAK-WINGED BIRD

A WEAK-WINGED bird dreaming of the skies,
I rise above the ground and fall,
Each time with a heavy thud;
And yet I rise and fall and rise again.

But no! I am not born to soar and scale
And tear across the starry paths to reach
Beyond all bounds of darkness, far beyond
All the beyonds one's mind may ever conceive.

But what is that I hear—a delightful voice?
“The dream of today is tomorrow's fact, rejoice!”

K. B. SITARAMAYYA

“SATYAVAN MUST DIE”

A DISCOURSE APROPOS OF A PHRASE IN SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of December 1990)

8. Morning's Halo Threads

THERE was a vacuum in the life of Satyavan prior to his coming in contact with Savitri. No doubt he lived a rich and noble life within and ever enjoyed the beauty and wonder of the primal earth gorgeous in varied splendours. If at times he caught sudden kingfishers flashing down to a pool, as though seizing them for an eternal eye, on other occasions his azure sky was filled with flocks of gently gliding swans; bird-cries answering to each other, messages from depth and marge, even rhythm-beats of infinity vibrating from another wideness than our sky, reached his innerly tuned ears. But more often than not he always felt something lacking in the secret recesses of his heart. In his strange courtship speech he tells the charmed maid:

I sat with the forest sages in their trance:
There poured awaking streams of diamond light,
I glimpsed the presence of the One in all.
But still there lacked the last transcendent power
And Matter still slept empty of its Lord.
The spirit was saved, the body lost and mute
Lived still with Death and ancient Ignorance.¹

He elaborates the point further by stating that when he tried to search for the clue about the mystery of life with the help of Thought as a lantern or when Beauty and Art showed him the marvel that form is, he still felt something missing in them, the indwelling Power was absent and hence they seemed to be valueless. But in the appearance of Savitri he at once recognised the coming of the transmuting miracle and knew that all would now change. In the flush of love he at once discovered a new dynamism that was absent so far in his spiritual poise

And Savitri too in that God-arranged meeting knew that the end of her unknown quest was only in Satyavan. She tells him so with revelation's swiftness:

O Satyavan, I have heard thee and I know;
I know that thou and only thou art he.²

Some bottomless knowledge has suddenly sprung up from the depths of her soul.

The identity is established and there is now no going back, come what may.

Satyavan and Savitri discover in each other that one reality in which ever abides the true oneness of their transcendently luminous souls. Even when the most adverse Fate was made known to Savitri, she did not waver and change her resolve. She immediately rejected her mother's advice to go again in search of another youth for a husband. On the contrary, firm as she was, she replied that it was only for Satyavan that she had treasured the rich occasion of her birth and that there was no other purpose for her in life. "A choice less rare" might have called a happier fate but that would have defeated the high aim for which she stood, falsified the true love that was her soul-triumphant discovery

Savitri was bidden by her father to depart and find her mate, the second self for whom her nature was asking. The task has now been accomplished and the lovers

One in the beats of difference and delight,
Responsive in divine and equal strains,
Discovering new notes of the eternal theme³

have come together. According to the Vyasa-episode Savitri at this stage goes back to the palace and informs her father about the discovery she made in the Shalwa Woods. Aswapathy then approaches Dyumathsena with a formal proposal and requests him to accept Savitri as bride for his son Satyavan. The marriage is performed strictly in accordance with the procedures prescribed by the scriptures, *vidhipurvaka*; it is solemnised in the presence of the seers and sages of the forest.

In Sri Aurobindo's epic, however, the young couple meet and get united in the Gandharva way. According to the Manu Smriti this type of marriage takes place with the happy consent and approval of both the partners subject to the condition that they are healthy and blemishless for a good conjugal relationship. In *Savitri* this relationship is lifted to the lyrical sublime even as bright Nature in beauty's festival stands a witness to the sweet and joyous union of the exceptional pair:

Then flitting like pale brilliant moths her hands
Took from the sylvan verge's sunlit arms
A load of their jewel faces' clustering swarms,
Companions of the spring-time and the breeze.
A candid garland set with simple forms
Her rapid fingers taught a flower song,
The stanzaed movement of a marriage hymn...
Then with raised hands that trembled a little now
At the very closeness that her soul desired,

This bond of sweetness, their bright union's sign,
 She laid on the bosom coveted by her love...
 He bent to her and took into his own
 Their married yearning joined like folded hopes;
 As if a whole rich world suddenly possessed,
 Wedded to all he had been, became himself,
 An inexhaustible joy made his alone,
 He gathered all Savitri into his clasp...
 As when a soul is merging into God
 To live in Him for ever and know His joy,
 Her consciousness was a wave of him alone
 And all her separate self was lost in his.
 As a starry heaven encircles happy earth,
 He shut her into himself in a circle of bliss
 And shut the world into himself and her...
 Each now was a part of the other's unity...
 On the high glowing cupola of the day
 Fate tied a knot with morning's halo threads
 While by the ministry of an auspice-hour
 Heart-bound before the sun, their marriage fire,
 The wedding of the eternal Lord and Spouse
 Took place again on earth in human forms:
 In a new act of the drama of the world
 The united Two began a greater age.
 In the silence and murmur of that emerald world
 And the mutter of the priest-wind's sacred verse,
 Amid the choral whisperings of the leaves
 Love's twain had joined together and grew one ⁴

The halo-threads of morning run through the hearts of the young lovers and bind them eternally together. The marriage arranged in heaven is performed on the earth.

But it is under the shadow of Fate that the marriage takes place here in the earthly groves. The heavenly wedding of the Lord and Spouse can never be subject to Fate and therefore if Fate has to tie the knot with the “morning's halo threads” then they must take human forms. They become Satyavan and Savitri and accept Fate's binding. But actually in the clasp of Satyavan and Savitri it is Fate who gets trapped or caught like an awkward and helpless alien. And when the clasp acquires the full godly might, after growing in strength through one complete cycle of time, he has to face the danger of being vanquished, in the heat of love, of dissolution. Victory of Love over Fate is then achieved through the human instrumentality. The Vedic ceremony is on. The marriage fire is lit; Agni

is the chief priest and the witness; Surya is the all-watchful father protecting the bride under the cover of his golden rays; Vayu is singing the marriage-hymn; Ashwinikumaras raise the loud chant of triumph, the gods and goddesses have assembled in the marriage-hall built over the years by the exquisite craftsmanship of Nature; they have brought very rare and precious gifts for presentation to the bride and the bridegroom. All is brightness and felicity. The choice and the approval and the celebrations are a part of that celestial predestination and jubilation. The travail and the triumph are godly in God's creation. Satyavan and Savitri join in them.

(To be continued)

R Y DESHPANDE

REFERENCES

- 1 *Savitri*, pp 405-406
- 2 *Ibid* , p 409
- 3 *Ibid* , p 374
- 4 *Ibid* , pp 409-411

NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

Six Encyclopaedias on "Sri Aurobindo"—A Comparison

From the viewpoint of the editor of an encyclopaedia, Sri Aurobindo's personality has four major aspects which could attract attention: the freedom-fighter, the poet, the spiritual philosopher and the integral yogi. I have examined six of the vast encyclopaedias in German, French and English to find out whether readers of the respective articles are given correct and helpful information about Sri Aurobindo. In five cases the entries were found under "Aurobindo", in one case under "Ghose".

1. Brockhaus Enzyklopädie

THE Brockhaus Enzyklopädie of 1967 in 20 Volumes had introduced Sri Aurobindo in just a few lines as "Indian nationalist and yoga-philosopher of Neo-Hinduism" with many followers in India and the West. The bibliographical entry had been extremely meagre: "The life divine (1951)". Perhaps someone protested against this rather disappointing article: in the 1987 edition (24 Vols.) we find a text four times longer. A few lines give his biography with reference to his revolutionary and literary activities. In 1910 he founded his Ashram, says the author, which was then taken charge of by the Mother in 1926. The first part of the information is, of course, incorrect, but we may concede some freedom to encyclopaedists to simplify complex facts in order to present them in the short space available. The Mother's name is given and she is also referred to as initiator of Auroville. Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy is given in the following sentence: "Salvation is a social-cosmic event in the sense of a new stage in the evolution of man, prepared by means of Yoga." There is a reference to his literary creation and two titles are given: *The Life Divine* (1940 ...) and *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1948 ...). The brackets also contain a reference to the German editions. We find that the year of the publication of *The Life Divine* has been corrected now. But it would have been adequate to refer at least to a biography in German, the Monograph of Prof. Otto Wolff, published in 1967 by the Rowohlt Verlag, one of the two leading German publishers.

2. Meyer's Enzyklopädisches Lexikon

The above Lexikon (1971) has 25 volumes and its article on Sri Aurobindo is slightly shorter than that of the Enzyklopädie (1987). Here a little more room is given to explain his philosophy: "Tried a synthesis of Indian and Occidental

thought; strove for a fusion—free of dogmas—of all religions serving mankind, through a comprehensive gnosis with the help of his ‘integral yoga’, a gnosis placing man into the ‘freedom of the superconscious.’” The article is concluded with a reference to the Ashram which developed, as the author writes, into a much-visited “Centre Universitaire International”, a rather imprecise statement, although “much-visited” is certainly correct. The biographical note seems to be copied from the 1967 edition of the Brockhaus Enzyklopadie: “Hauptwerk [main work]: *The Life Divine* (1951).”

3. Grand Larousse

The *Grand Larousse en 5 volumes* (1987) is the smallest encycloaedia consulted for the purpose of this comparison. Accordingly, the text on Sri Aurobindo is rather short, but actually quite adequate in the context of the edition. The text introduces Sri Aurobindo as an Indian mystic and philosopher, with a few brief biographical data. There is a proper reference to his participation in the nationalist movement and his subsequent retirement. According to this author, “he lived in an ashram which he founded in Pondicherry in 1914.” His doctrine is mainly expressed in *Synthèse des yogas* and *Vie divine*. Sri Aurobindo conceives his yoga as “the path which allows you to realize within yourself the truth of God,” says the author. Perhaps it is difficult to say something more informative in so short an entry. At least the reference to two important main works should help readers. At the end of the article there is a brief reference to Auroville.

4. Encyclopaedia Universalis

The Encyclopaedia Universalis (18 Vols.) was published in France in 1980. It dedicates two and a half columns—nearly a full page—to Sri Aurobindo, providing by far the most detailed information of all the works reviewed here.

The first two paragraphs give a short summary of the essential points, as is the method in this encyclopaedia. It is pointed out that Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy has a European element, the “doctrine of biological evolution”, and an Indian element, the “ontology”. For man, Being is God eternal, infinite, omnipresent, but at the same time also within himself. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram is described as a spiritual community with considerable educational activities, which promote the développement of international scientific knowledge as well as the progress of physical education. Almost a full column in small print is dedicated to Sri Aurobindo’s biography up to 1910. Virtually every important detail of his life is noted in this comprehensive report about his youth in England and his political activities in India. The reader gets a feeling that an expert is at work here. The author also knows of Sri Aurobindo’s public appearances (*darśan*) as well as of the *samadhi*. He also points out that Sri Aurobindo’s

departure “has not been taken as such by all his disciples and does not exclude, for them, the continuation of his presence.”

God, according to Sri Aurobindo, says the writer, is present in matter, in mind and supermind (the term is not further explained). The Truth, expressing itself through the intelligence of man, must manifest more and more fully through a guided evolution. The Truth is already found in ancient texts, the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita and also Heraclitus, with whatever variation depending on the respective age and locality. Sri Aurobindo’s yoga is an “integral adjustment” for everyone, which is not an adjustment to individual preferences, but the realisation of the divine Truth found within oneself. The idea of synthesis entirely dominates his thinking which finds special expression in his main works. *La Synthèse des Yoga, la Vie divine*.

The Ashram, the spiritual community directed by the Mother, tries to realize this ideal in collaboration with well-wishers all over the world. There are centres also in Europe and America. Finally, a short reference is made to Auroville.

The bibliography names Sri Aurobindo’s works *La Mère* and *On the Veda*, apart from *The Synthesis of Yoga* and *The Life Divine* in French, as mentioned, above. Furthermore, two titles by T. V. Kapaly Sastry and Pavitra respectively are given.

This well-informed article falls short only in so far as it creates the impression that Sri Aurobindo has merely revived old truths that were lost, combining various valuable traditions into a grand synthesis. The fact that he has added a new element is not brought out, but it would also be extremely difficult to convey that to readers in limited space. We know that Sri Aurobindo wrote hundreds of letters to his disciples trying to make clear that he was not interested in mere repetition. So this bit of information is lacking in the article, although otherwise it provides a maximum of useful knowledge. The author’s initials are given at the end as J.F., and that is none else than Jean Filliozat, once director of the Institut Français d’Indologie in Pondicherry.

5. Collier’s Encyclopedia

The above work was published in 24 volumes in London/New York (1986). It is the only text which lists Sri Aurobindo under “Ghose”. The article is about as long as that of the Brockhaus Enzyklopadie. Sri Aurobindo is introduced as “Indian philosopher and religious and political leader”. There is a reference to his political activities and his withdrawal to Pondicherry where “he devoted himself to the spiritual life and writing, developing his philosophy of cosmic salvation.” Spiritual illumination “descends” into human experience, but can only be attained through yogic effort. A community of disciples gradually formed around Sri Aurobindo.

The author of this article mentions the names of the periodicals which Sri Aurobindo edited, and says that apart from several books on poetry and yoga he published *War and Self-Determination*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Need in Nationalism*, *The Life Divine* and *The Riddle of this World* (the respective years of publication are also given). This is actually a rather strange selection, since it omits *Savitri* and gives a title such as *The Need in Nationalism* which—I am sure—many followers of Sri Aurobindo have never heard of.

6. The New Encyclopaedia Britannica.

SRI Aurobindo's name is given in the 12-volume Micropaedia section of the voluminous Britannica (Chicago, 1985). The article is the second longest, taking nearly a full column of space or one third of a page. The text introduces Sri Aurobindo as "seer, poet, and Indian nationalist who originated the philosophy of cosmic salvation through spiritual evolution." (The term "salvation" seems to be indispensable to some of the writers.)

The Britannica notes in the biographical section that Sri Aurobindo became proficient "in two classical and three modern European languages", while serious study of yoga and Indian languages as well as Sanskrit was begun later in India. From 1902 to 1910 he faced "stormy" years, trying to free India from the British rule. In Pondicherry, after his withdrawal from politics, he devoted himself "to the development of his unique philosophy" and founded the Ashram as "an international culture centre for spiritual development".

The author analyzes Sri Aurobindo's theory of "cosmic salvation" with the help of the Hegelian system of thesis and antithesis. "Enlightenment comes from above (thesis), while the spiritual mind (supermind) strives through yogic illumination to reach upward from below (antithesis). When these two forces blend, a gnostic individual is created (synthesis)." Eventually, through transcendent yogic illumination the individual is freed from all bonds of individuality and "by extension, all mankind will eventually achieve *mukti* (liberation). Thus, Aurobindo created a dialectic mode of salvation not only for the individual but for all mankind."

Sri Aurobindo's literary output is described as "voluminous, extremely complex, and sometimes chaotic" (!). Unfortunately, we have no occasion to ask the author what he means by the last term. In any case, he alone manages to present a fully acceptable bibliographical note, referring to *The Life Divine*, *The Human Cycle*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *On the Veda*, *Collected Poems and Plays*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Synthesis of Yoga* and *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*, along with the respective years of publication.

Conclusion

None of the reviewed articles would be fully satisfying to a follower of Sri

Aurobindo, although all of them give some useful information. The most comprehensive exposition is found in the *Encyclopaedia Universalis* which especially provides a very detailed biography. The *Britannica*; referring to Sri Aurobindo's "unique philosophy", shows an insight which is lacking in all other entries. But there is in it the unexpected "howler" that the Supermind aspires from below through Yoga to get illumination from above, whereas for Sri Aurobindo it is the Supermind itself that illumines the human mental consciousness and is the Gnosis which shall create the gnostic individual. It is also quite strange that *Savitri*, considered by Sri Aurobindo himself and his followers as his best literary creation, is not mentioned anywhere except in the bibliographical note of the *Britannica*. Furthermore, the key term "transformation" is not found in any text, while "salvation" appears again and again. In this respect future editions could significantly improve their texts.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—Twenty-nine True Stories of Sadhaks and Devotees (Twenty-two of them being published for the first time.)
Author—Shyam Kumari. Published by the author and available from her, c/o Sri Aurobindo Ashram Post Office, Pondicherry 605 002. Pp. 258 + x, Price Rs. 48.

SRI AUROBINDO and the Mother cast their net wide and it brought in many and varied souls to the Ashram. Each one has a fascinating story of how it was pulled in. Shyam Kumari has indeed a rich record of such stories, many of them unpublished before.

Perhaps the most interesting and inspiring of them is Dyuman's, mostly told in his own words. Because of his close contact with the Mother and his many years of dedicated service, because of the Mother's confidence in him and the way in which she increasingly entrusted him with missions and decisions of every kind, this story makes compelling reading and throws as much light on the Mother's organisation of the Ashram as any one sadhak's story probably could. He tells of the many times when the Ashram was beset by financial pressure:

"In that period there was a terrible pressure on the Mother. Satyakarma, the banker, would come and say he needed such and such an amount. I knew we did not have so much money in cash. In the evening I would take a piece of the Mother's jewellery and go to the market to sell it or I would go to some friend and tell him, 'The market value is..., but I want this much.' Then I would bring not the market value but the Mother-value, and then before she came down from her room, the required money would be there on the inside table."¹

"Slowly I sold all the Mother's jewellery. She had to sell all that her mother and great-grandmother had given her. Had people understood what she had to undergo, their whole attitude and lives would have changed.

"I sold everything of the Mother. Nothing was left. In 1949 when she said she would like to sell her saris, I was so shocked. You see, she had sold everything and now even the saris. I reacted very strongly. The Mother said, 'I have got one thousand saris. If somebody brings me one lakh of rupees, I will give all of them away. But nobody should tell me, 'I will take a few, I will give only some money.' They should take them *en bloc* and give me one lakh'."²

We learn about all sorts of things in the story, including the Mother's cars and how they were acquired, about Cartier-Bresson and the famous photographs, about the film made by Ajit Bose. The story ends with a long letter by Sri Aurobindo regarding Dyuman.

Another revealing story is that of Laljibhai. Here there is a beautiful and memorable dream:

¹ *How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*, p 15

² *Ibid*, p 18

“In a dream, while passing a building I saw Sri Aurobindo and Champaklal standing there. I approached them and did Pranam to Sri Aurobindo. He said, ‘Lalajibhai, do you know all this is decaying?’ He explained at length, ‘Men and buildings, birds and animals, the vegetable kingdom—all are decaying. The age is changing. The Mother’s and my Yoga of Transformation is for this reason. Our yoga will be successful in the whole world. Then nothing will decay. Sorrow, poverty, wars, the sense of mine and thine, enmity, jealousy, selfishness—all these will go. And Sachchidananda—the empire of Love, Light, Harmony, Unity and Peace will spread over the earth. There will be no enmity amongst people. Sorrow will become extinct, a thing of the past.’”³

Then there is the story of the European family, two children and their parents, of whom the mother vibrated with joy when she heard the word “India”. Young men, students, little girls are seen being ineluctably drawn to this centre of the universe which is the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The second part of this book will be published soon.

MAGGI LIDCHI

³ *Ibid* , p 74

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

27th Annual Conference

12 August 1990

Speech by Srijita Roy

PERSONAL EFFORT AND SURRENDER IN SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

FROM time immemorial many great mystics, prophets and seers have said that in all that is done in the world, it is the Divine alone who acts; it is His will alone that works in all the movements of Nature. It is our ego that makes us think that we are the doers of our deeds. Sri Aurobindo too says: "Always indeed it is the higher Power that acts. Our sense of personal effort and aspiration comes from the attempt of the egoistic mind to identify itself in a wrong and imperfect way with the workings of the divine Force."¹ If this is so then the immediate questions that rise to our mind are: Is there no need of personal effort in our Yogic endeavour? And if personal effort has a role to play, then what is its role?

In order to know the role of personal effort in our Yoga, we must first understand the process of Yoga. In Sri Aurobindo's words: "The process of Yoga is a turning of the human soul from the egoistic state of consciousness absorbed in the outward appearances and attractions of things to a higher state in which the Transcendent and the Universal can pour itself into the individual mould and transform it."² To carry this process to its fulfilment one has to pass through various stages. Initially, there are long periods of internal struggle where the sadhak has to reject resolutely the lower impulses and desires and open himself to the Divine Force. Gradually, as he becomes more and more receptive, he becomes a fit instrument of the Divine. It is only when he is fully open and receptive that the Divine takes up his whole being and works through him incessantly without any need of personal effort. But in the initial stages personal effort is indispensable. And along with it comes also the need of a complete surrender. The surrender cannot be complete at the beginning. It is by a persistent effort to give oneself and all that one is and has and does to the Divine that the surrender becomes gradually perfect and total.

But this persistent effort of the sadhak is no easy task. For in the process, numerous difficulties come in, and he tends to get dejected, seeing that no apparent progress or result has been obtained. This is a very common pheno-

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Cent Ed., Vol 20), p 53

² *Ibid*, p 51

menon which every sadhak taking the path of Yoga experiences in the course of his sadhana. And in the effort to surrender oneself, as one is ignorant and obscure at the beginning, it is possible that he may open to some undivine forces which might create seemingly insuperable obstacles. Sri Aurobindo therefore warns: "... our surrender must be no blind and inert passivity to all influences or any influence, but sincere, conscious, vigilant, pointed to the One and the Highest alone."¹

There is, however, only one way to do away with these obstacles or else at least to minimise them. It is to invoke the Divine Shakti to come and take full possession of our being. All the obstacles and dangers on the path of Yoga come because we human beings deal with everything from an egoistic point of view. Even when we submit ourselves to the Divine we expect the Divine to fulfil our personal desires and interests. And when that is not done, we are dissatisfied, and we blame the Divine. We fail to understand that the Divine's way of working is not the same as the human way.

While calling the Divine Shakti, a personal effort consisting of a triple labour of aspiration, rejection and surrender has to be undertaken. There should be a constant, unceasing, vigilant aspiration, a complete rejection of the movements of the lower nature and a surrender of one's whole being to the Divine. And as for the resistances that create obstacles, Sri Aurobindo says, "But it is best not to struggle with the resistances but to stand back from them, observe as a witness, reject these movements and call on the Divine Power to remove them."² In this process however there is a tendency to become inert and leave everything to the Divine. This is not the right attitude. As Sri Aurobindo warns us: "Note that a tamasic surrender refusing to fulfil the conditions and calling on God to do everything and save one all the trouble and struggle is a deception and does not lead to freedom and perfection."³ So the personal effort indeed is indispensable, so long as self-surrender is imperfect and incomplete. And even when surrender is total there has to be a constant assent of the being to the working of the Divine Power and an unflinching vigilance so that no wrong forces can enter in us at any moment. Gradually as the surrender becomes complete the personal effort is changed into an action of the Divine Force. As Sri Aurobindo says: "The personal effort has to be transformed progressively into a movement of the Divine Force."⁴ When this is done the Divine Force begins to work through the being, which then becomes a purified instrument. Finally in the last perfect stage, the sadhak does not feel that he is making any personal effort. For his sense of ego ceases. And it is the ego which brings in the idea of personal effort. Therefore when the ego is removed the Divine Power works

¹ "The Supramental Yoga" (Cent Ed , Vol 17), p 72

² *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 24), p 1692

³ *The Mother* (Cent Ed , Vol 25), p 8

⁴ *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 23), p 589

freely through all the parts of the being.

At this final stage the sadhak's life becomes a spontaneous, harmonious outflowering of the Divine Truth, Consciousness and Bliss. Yet in the initial stages, personal effort and surrender which are really intertwined are absolutely essential. But by personal effort alone, the sadhak cannot progress far in Yoga. Surrender to the Divine must accompany it. The surrender can be to any form or aspect of the Divine that is suitable to the sadhak. But for all the sadhaks of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga this surrender would naturally be to the Mother who guides us and sustains us through all the trials and vicissitudes on the path of Yoga. But human beings as we are, our surrender is almost always mixed with lower elements. Let us then take the opportunity of this day of the birth anniversary of our Lord, to begin sincerely an attempt to make our surrender to the Divine Mother complete and total.

I would like to end my speech with one of the Mother's prayers. First I shall read out the translated version in English and then the original in French.

"I am Thine, I am in Thee, Thyself, in the plenitude of eternal bliss."¹

"Je suis à Toi, en Toi, Toi dans la plénitude de l'éternelle béatitude."²

¹ *Prayers and Meditations, Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent Ed), Vol 1, p 148

² *Prières et Méditations* (3rd Ed , 1952), p 155