

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

SPECIAL ISSUE

24 APRIL 1991

PRICE: Rs. 5.00

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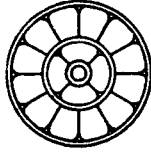
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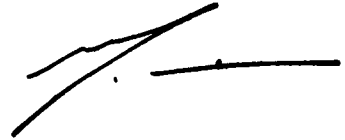
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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All correspondence to be addressed to
MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Pondicherry - 605 002, India
Editor's Phone 24782
Publishers Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Editor K D SETHNA
Published by DYUMAN
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST
PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT, PONDICHERRY 605 002
Printed by AMIYO RANJAN GANGULY
at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry 605 002
PRINTED IN INDIA
Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No R N 8667/63

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Vol. XLIV

No. 4

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 23 APRIL 1951

An Excerpt

*Sri Aurobindo writes here: "...Few and brief in their visits are the Bright Ones who are willing or permitted to succour."*¹ Why?

ONE must go and ask them! But there is a conclusion, the last sentences give a very clear explanation. It is said: "Nay, then, is immortality a plaything to be given lightly to a child, or the divine life a prize without effort or the crown for a weakling?"² This comes back to the question why the adverse forces have the right to interfere, to harass you. But this is precisely the test necessary for your sincerity. If the way were very easy, everybody would start on the way, and if one could reach the goal without any obstacle and without any effort, everybody would reach the goal, and when one has come to the end, the situation would be the same as when one started, there would be no change. That is, the new world would be exactly what the old has been. It is truly not worth the trouble! Evidently a process of elimination is necessary so that only what is capable of manifesting the new life remains. This is the reason and there is no other, this is the best of reasons. And, you see, it is a tempering, it is the ordeal of fire, only that which can stand it remains absolutely pure; when everything has burnt down, there remains only the little ingot of pure gold. And it is like that. What puts things out very much in all this is the religious idea of fault, sin, redemption. But there is no arbitrary decision! On the contrary, for each one it is the best and most favourable conditions which are given. We were saying the other day that it is only his friends whom God treats with severity; you thought it was a joke, but it is true. It is only to those who are full of hope, who will pass through this purifying flame, that the conditions for attaining the maximum result are given. And the human mind is made in such a way that you may test this; when something extremely unpleasant happens to you, you may tell yourself, "Well, this proves I am worth the trouble of being given this difficulty, this proves there is something in me which can resist the difficulty", and you will notice that instead of tormenting yourself, you rejoice—you will be so happy and so strong that even the most unpleasant things will seem to you quite charming! This is a very easy experiment to make. Whatever the circumstance, if your mind is accustomed to look at it as something favourable, it will no longer be unpleasant for you. This is quite well known; as long as the mind refuses to accept a thing, struggles against it, tries to obstruct it, there are torments, difficulties, storms, inner struggles and all suffering. But the minute the mind says, "Good, this is what has to come, it is thus that it must happen", whatever happens, you are content.

(*Questions and Answers*, 1951, pp 353-55)

¹ "The Way", Cent Vol 17, p 40

² *Ibid*

THE FULLNESS OF YOGA

AN OLD ARTICLE BY SRI AUROBINDO

WE are to exceed our human stature and become divine; but if we are to do this, we must first get God; for the human ego is the lower imperfect term of our being, God is the higher perfect term. He is the possessor of our supernature and without His permission there can be no effectual rising. The finite cannot become infinite unless it perceives its own secret infinity and is drawn by it or towards it; nor can the symbol-being, unless it glimpses, loves and pursues the Real-being in itself, overcome by its own strength the limits of its apparent nature. It is a particular becoming and is fixed in the nature of the symbol that it has become; only the touch of that which is all becomings and exceeds all becomings, can liberate it from the bondage to its own limited Nature. God is That which is the All and which exceeds the All. It is therefore only the knowledge, love and possession of God that can make us free. He who is transcendent can alone enable us to transcend ourselves; He who is universal can alone enlarge us from our limited particular existence.

In this necessity is the justification of that great and imperishable force of Nature, which Rationalism has unjustly and irrationally despised, Religion. I speak of religion,—not of a creed, church or theology, for all these things are rather forms of religiosity than essence of or even always action of religion,—but of that personal and intimate religion, a thing of temper and spirit and life, not of views and formal actions, which draws a man passionately and absorbingly to his own vision of the Supreme or his own idea of something higher than himself which he must follow or become. Without a fervent worship of the Supreme in the heart, a strong aspiration upwards to It in the will or a vehement thirst for It in the temperament, we cannot have the impulse to be other than ourselves or the force to do anything so difficult as the transcending of our own ingrained and possessing human nature. The prophets have spoken and the Avatars have descended always for the one purpose, to call us to God, to inspire us to this great call on our upward straining energies or else to prepare something in the world which will help to bring humanity nearer to the goal of its difficult ascending journey.

It may seem at first sight that there is no need for these religious terms or this religious spirit. If the aim is to become something superior to man, to evolve a superman out of ourselves, as man has been evolved out of the ape,—if that statement of the progression be indeed the truth,—the ape out of inferior animal forms, they again out of mollusc and protoplasm, jellyfish or vegetable animals, and so to the end of the series, then what need is there of anything but the training, preferably the most intelligent and scientific training of our mental, moral and physical energies till they reach a point when they are transmuted by

the psychical chemistry of Nature into the coming superior type? But the problem is not so simple, in reality. There are three errors hidden at the basis of this sceptical question. We mistake the nature of the operation to be effected, we mistake the nature of the power and process that works it out, we mistake the nature of the thing that uses the power and works out the process

Nature does not propose to man to work out a higher mental, moral and physical variation-type in the mould of the present human being,—the symbol we are; it proposes to break that general type altogether in order to advance to a new symbol-being which shall be supernatural to present man as present man is to the animal below him. It is doubtful whether in the pure human mould Nature can go much farther than she has gone at present, that she can for instance produce a higher mental type than Newton, Shakespeare, Caesar or Napoleon, a higher moral type than Buddha, Christ or St Francis, a higher physical type than the Greek athlete or, to give modern examples, a Sandow or a Ramamurti. She may seek to bring about a better combination of mental and moral, or of moral, mental and physical energies; but is she likely to produce anything much above the level of Confucius or Socrates? It is more probable and seems to be true that Nature seeks in this field to generalise a higher level and a better combination. Neither need we believe that, even here, her object is to bring all men to the same level; for that can only be done by levelling downwards. Nothing in Nature is free from inequalities except the forms that are the lowest and least developed. The higher the effort accomplished, the more richly endowed the organism of the species, the greater the chances of inequality. In so high and developed a natural movement as Man, equality of individual opportunity is conceivable, equality of natural powers and accomplishment is a chimera. Nor will the generalisation of powers or the increase of material make any difference to the level of natural attainment. All the accumulated discoveries and varied information of the modern scientist will not make him mentally the superior of Aristotle or Socrates; he is neither an acuter mind nor a greater mental force. All the varied activities of modern philanthropy will not produce a greater moral type than Buddha or St Francis. The invention of the motor car will not make up for the lost swiftness and endurance nor gymnastics restore the physical capacity of the Negro or the American Indian. We see therefore the limits of Nature's possibilities in the human symbol, fixed by the character of the symbol itself and recognised by her in her strivings.

It is still a question whether in these limits the chief preoccupation of Nature is the exhaustion of the possibilities of the human symbol. That is rather man's preoccupation and therefore the direction she takes when human intellect interferes with her normal progression. Left to herself and even utilising human interferences, she seems bent rather on breaking the mould, than on perfecting it,—only indeed in her more advanced individuals and more daring movements and with due regard to the safety of the general human type, but this is always

her method when she wishes to advance to a fresh symbol without destroying the anterior species. The more civilised man becomes, the more she plagues him with moral abnormalities, excesses of vice and virtue and confusions of the very type of vice and virtue; the more he intellectualises, the more he insists on rationality as his utmost bourne, the more she becomes dissatisfied and clamours to him to develop rather his instincts and his intuitions; the more he strives after health and hygiene, the more she multiplies diseases and insanities of mind and body. He has triumphed over supernaturalism, he has chained her down to the material, human and rational; immediately she breaks out fiercely into unthought-of revivals and gigantic supernaturalisms. Whatever work she is intent on, she will not be baulked in that work by the limited human reason. Through all her vast being she feels the pulsation of a supernatural power, the workings and strivings of a knowledge superior to material reason. She breaks out, therefore, she compels, she insists. Everywhere we see her striving to break the mental, moral and physical type she has created and to get beyond it to some new processes as yet not clearly discerned. She attacks deliberately the sound healthfulness and equilibrium of our normal type of intellectuality, morality and physical being. She is stricken also with a mania of colossalism; colossal structures, colossal combinations, colossal heights and speeds, colossal dreams and ambitions outline themselves everywhere more or less clearly, more or less dimly. Unable as yet to do her will in the individual, she works with masses; unable in the mind, with material forms and inventions; unable in actualities, with hopes and dreams; unable to reproduce or produce Napoleons and super-Napoleons, she generalises a greater reach of human capacity from which they may hereafter emerge more easily, and meanwhile she creates instead Dread-noughts and Super-dread-noughts, Trusts and mammoth combines, teams with distance-destroying inventions and seems eager and furious to trample to pieces the limitations of space and time she herself has created.

As if to point her finger to the thing she intends, she has accumulated the signs of this process of breaking and rebuilding in the phenomena of genius. It is now common knowledge that genius hardly appears in the human species unattended, unprepared or unaccompanied by abnormalities in the individual body, vitality and mind which contains it,—degeneration, insanity or freak in the heredity which produces it and even disturbance and supranormality in the human environment in which it occurs. The haste of a brilliant generalisation establishes on this basis the paradox that genius itself is a morbid phenomenon of insanity or degeneration. The true explanation is sufficiently clear. In order to establish genius in the human system, Nature is compelled to disturb and partially break the normality of that system, because she is introducing into it an element that is alien as it is superior to the type which it enriches. Genius is not the perfect evolution of that new and divine element; it is only a beginning or at the highest an approximation in certain directions. It works fitfully and uncer-

tainly in the midst of an enormous mass of somewhat disordered human mentality, vital nervousity, physical animality. The thing itself is divine, it is only the undivine mould in which it works that is to a lesser or greater extent broken and ploughed up by the unassimilated force that works in it. Sometimes there is an element in the divine intruder which lays its hand on the mould and sustains it, so that it does not break at all, nor is flawed; or if there is a disturbance, it is slight and negligible. Such an element there was in Caesar, in Shakespeare, in Goethe. Sometimes also a force appears to which we can no longer apply the description of genius without being hopelessly inadequate in our terminology. Then those who have eyes to see, bow down and confess the Avatar. For it is often the work of the Avatar to typify already, partly or on the whole, what Nature has not yet effected in the mass or even in the individual, so that his passing may stamp it on the material ether in which we live.

But what is this type of which the great Mother is in labour? What birth will emerge from the cries and throes of this prolonged and mighty pregnancy? A greater type of humanity, it may be said. But in order to understand what we are saying, we must first see clearly what the humanity is which she seeks to surpass. This human symbol, this type we now are is a mental being with a mental ego, working in a vital case by mind always, but upon matter, in matter and through matter. It is limited in its higher workings by its lower instruments. Its basis of mind is egoistic, sensational and determined by experience and environment, its knowledge therefore pursues wider or narrower circles in a fixed and meagre range. Its moral temperament and action is similarly egoistic, sensational, experiential and determined by environment; for this reason it is bound equally to sin and virtue and all attempts radically to moralise the race within the limits of its egoistic nature have been and must necessarily, in spite of particular modifications, end in general failure. It is not only a mixed but a confused type, body and vitality interfering with mind and mind both hampered by and hampering body and vitality. Its search for knowledge, founded on sense contact, is a groping like that of a man finding his way in a forest at night; it makes acquaintance with its surroundings by touching, dashing on or stumbling over them; and, although it has an uncertain light of reason given it which partially corrects this disability, yet since reason has also to start from the senses which are consistent falsifiers of values, rational knowledge is not only restricted but pursued by vast dimnesses and uncertainties even in that which it seems to itself to have grasped. It secures a few flowers of truth by rummaging in a thorny hedge of doubts and errors. The actions of the type also are a breaking through thickets, a sanguine yet tormented stumbling forward through eager failures to partial and temporary successes. Immensely superior to all else that Nature had yet effected, this type is yet so burdened with disabilities that, if it were impossible to break its mould and go forward, there would be much justification for those pessimistic philosophies which despair of Life and see in the Will not to

live humanity's only door of escape admitting for it no other salvation. But Nature is the will of the All-Wise God and she is not working out a reduction of the world to absurdity. She knows her goal, she knows that man as he is at present is only a transitional type; and so far as she can consistently with the survival of the type, she presses forward to what she has seen in God's eternal knowledge as standing beyond. From this ego, she moves towards a universal consciousness, from this limitation to a free movement in infinity, from this twilight and groping mind to the direct sunlit vision of things, from this conflict without issue between vice and virtue to a walking that keeps spontaneously to a God-appointed path, from this broken and grief-besieged action to a joyous and free activity, from this confused strife of our members to a purified, unentangled and harmonious combination, from this materialised mentality to an idealised and illuminated life, body and mind, from the symbol to reality, from man separated from God to man in God and God in man. In brief, as she has aspired successfully from matter to life, from life to mind and mental ego, so she aspires and with a fated success to an element beyond mind, the *viñāna* of the Hindus, the self-luminous idea or Truth-self now concealed and superconscious in man and the world, as life was always concealed in matter and mind in life. What this *viñāna* is, we have yet to see, but through it she knows she can lay firm hold on that highest term of all which is the reality of all symbols, in Spirit, in Sachchidananda. -

The aim of Nature is also the aim of Yoga. Yoga, like Nature at its summit, seeks to break this mould of ego, this mould of mentalised life-body and materialised mind, in order to achieve ideal action, ideal truth and infinite freedom in our spiritual being. To effect so enormous an end, great and dangerous processes have to be used. Those who have been eager on this road or have opened up new paths towards the goal, have had to affront as a possibility frequently realised loss of reason, loss of life and health or dissolution of the moral being. They are not to be pitied or scorned even when they succumb; rather are they martyrs for humanity's progress, far more than the lost navigator or the scientist slain by the dangers of his investigation. They prepare consciently the highest possible achievement towards which the rest of humanity instinctively and unconsciously moves. We may even say that Yoga is the appointed means Nature holds in reserve for the accomplishment of her end, when she has finished her long labour of evolving at least a part of humanity temperamentally equal to the effort and intellectually, morally and physically prepared for success. Nature moves towards supernature, Yoga moves towards God; the world impulse and the human aspiration are one movement and the same journey.

(1913)

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

I AM going on as usual. The peace is there and the aspiration continues, but a big breakthrough has to come. When I look deep within myself, I seem to feel a thorough self-giving in general to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, but evidently whatever is there is not fully translated into the outer being with its remnants of the old Adam though they are not specially lingering on the look-out for any old (or even Young) Eve. I hope it won't take too long for the ordinary consciousness to kindle completely with the rose-and-white glow of the innermost profundity and the blue-silver-gold splendour of the overarching infinite. Will I have enough time to live altogether up to the futurist vision Sri Aurobindo had in choosing for me my Ashram name "Amal Kiran", meaning according to him "The Clear Ray"? The adjective separated from the noun may not be very difficult to exemplify in life: I could be sufficiently clear-headed. But for the day-to-day Me of the clear head to have a constant illumination which goes beyond the surface of things, a ray from behind and from above has to be at work. At all hours I have to be radiant-hearted on the one hand and, on the other, lustrously super-conscious. Then the day-to-day will be integrally in touch with the permanent. No doubt, the process is on towards a total harmony of the apparent and the passing with the immanent-immortal and the transcendent-eternal. But oh it is so slow! I pray that before this body falls, the Ever-unfalling who is deep down and high up may sojourn *à la* Omar Khayyam

Here in this battered caravanserai
Whose portals are alternate night and day. (10.10.1990)

*

I am a little late in replying, as I often am. The thought of my habitual guilt was the first one this morning after the habitual feeling of a heart wanting to be pure of every desire except the ache for the Divine Beloved. On getting out of bed I re-read your letter and was struck by two points.

First, your resolve "not to give a chance to any so-called great person" to become your "Guru". Once we are dedicated to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, who were never anxious to have disciples, how can we share our souls with anyone who claims spiritual eminence and is eager to have people falling at his feet? I remember my friend Purani telling me an incident of early days. Sri Aurobindo was standing at the door of his room while Purani was leaving. The disciple went down on his knees to make obeisance to Sri Aurobindo's feet. After a few seconds he lifted his head and looked up. There was nobody standing

any more. Purani told me with a laugh: "Strange Guru indeed who runs away like that!"

You have also hit the mark when you declare: "I am quite a child but the Divine Mother's child. That is enough for me. I have no need of fame and name." This shows at the same time a natural humility, a proper sense of what is truly of worth in one and a detachment from common ambition. Having been accepted by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother should tend to give one an all-sufficient happiness. But the desire for fame, the yearning for name are not easy temptations to overcome if one has some talent beyond the ordinary. Rarely do specially gifted people act like Sri Aurobindo and the Mother who always tried to keep themselves in the background. Once the Mother, after reading an article of mine on her, published in the Bombay paper *The Sunday Standard* of February 17, 1952, told me: "When I read anything written on me in public, all my hair stands up! Speak about the aim of the Integral Yoga, the method of doing it, but I don't like my personality to be pushed forward. Not that I have any false modesty. I know where I have come from, but the thing of value for the world is our teaching. There may even be an unsympathetic response if the teaching is mixed up too much with us as persons." After a moment she added: "Keeping our persons back may be good practical policy too. Especially as regards the Western world it is better to speak of the Spiritual Truth impersonally."

I have gone through some tests of "fame and name" in my early life—having managed to distinguish myself during school and college days. I can't say I always came out successfully through the tests. But after joining the Ashram I spent many years during which all I cared for in connection with my writings was that they should pass under Sri Aurobindo's eyes and get acceptance or rejection. His comment and nothing else decided for me the worth of my prose or poetry. Once in the 'thirties I even set aside a friend's offer to publish all the poems I had so far written—set it aside because the collected works of my Guru had not yet come out. Later on, when books on various subjects from my pen accumulated I used to speculate how they could get published. Though I was never a pusher, I did feel it would be good if I could come out in print. However, one day, standing before the whole array of my numerous typescripts, kept in separate files, I suddenly became aware of a great wave of what I can only describe as a self-swallowing quietude of aloofness. In a movement simultaneously of humility and transcendence the words came out of my mouth: "It doesn't matter if none of these books get published!" That was a moment of immense relief—of profound freedom.

Many books of mine have seen the light since then—in fact 23 in all—but essentially with an impersonal attitude behind them. Today 18 books still remain unpublished. In relation to them, a few nights back I passed through what I consider one of the most important experiences of my Ashram life. It happened

during sleep. I had a dream in which I found that the cupboard in which all my typescripts had been stored was quite empty! A ghastly surprise was the first reaction to their disappearance. Then something within me said: "Remember you have been doing Yoga. Are you or are you not taking this tragedy with perfect equanimity? It is impossible for you to rewrite these books. Can you rise above the tremendous void in front of you?" My spontaneous answer was "Yes." The next moment I woke up, a little stunned but deeply thankful to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that even in the dream-state, face to face with an irreparable misfortune, my chief concern could be whether I was doing their Yoga properly.

If we may put together little things with great, I may recount a conversation with the Mother long ago. She used to be a very fine painter. Referring to her own work, she told me: "Some of my best paintings were done in Japan. But most of them are lost." I blurted out: "Is this not a great loss? What have you done about it?" With a calm smile she said: "Don't you know that we live in eternity?" As if from a sleep I had woken up, I looked into her eyes and murmured: "Of course, of course." It must be this occasion that sowed the seed of whatever distant sense I may have caught of the plenary Beyond, the Timelessness that is the All. A shadow of that eternal Fullness must have got projected in both the instances connected with my unpublished writings. (20.10 1990)

*

I am glad that you have the ideal of spiritual development and realise at the age of fifty that time is running out. If your acute sense of having wasted half a century leads you to open more and more to Sri Aurobindo's Godward-guiding light and the Mother's life-divinising force, the past will not strike you as just a wilderness of vain hours but as a meandering preparation for the straight Yogic path that lies ahead. Feel increasingly a standing back in wide detachment from the crisscross of reactions in your outer being—reactions that are sensitive personal responses to hurting touches from the world or else self-indulgent answers to tempting stimuli from it. With such a background of peaceful impersonality at all times, let your foreground life be a constant uplifting of all these touches and stimuli to the subtle presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that is always with you as at once a soothing supporter by your side and a forward-calling commander in front

As for the disorders and misfires you find all around us today, don't allow them to trouble you overmuch. The best we can do is to appeal to our Gurus to hasten the advent of the Golden Age they have visioned in spite of being clearly conscious of the misery and madness of the world into which they had descended. If within our little individual world we try to live with the deep sense of them at secret work we shall have done our bit.

I was rather tickled by your final flourish: “Yours divinely, T. Prasad.” What made you choose this mode of closing the letter? There must be something in your mind which led you to such an extraordinary gesture. From the purely literary viewpoint, “divinely” can prove to be the *mot juste* by getting followed by your surname “Prasad”, a term which in India signifies something touched by or blessed by the Divine and taken as a gift from Him by human beings! But I don’t think you intended this witticism.¹ (25.12.1990)

*

The anecdotes you recount about your mother show clearly how spiritual help can come and change the whole aspect of a situation. But, whether we are helped or not in the way we may expect, we must never lose faith in the Divine Power. Once we put ourselves in its hands, whatever happens is turned by it to our soul’s good. Furthermore, the Divine’s aim with us is to make our souls progress. If this progress is at times best brought about by what we may call unfavourable circumstances, the Divine’s presence can very well be in them. All these are subtleties the believer has to bear in mind. But, of course, they have their truth provided our faith and trust in God and our adherence to Him with our inmost being are genuinely there. In any case, remembrance of Him, self-offering to Him, prayer to Him not only that His Will may be done but also that our wills may be guided by Him—these are the main points for a sincere sadhak (27.12.1990)

*

Your recent letter has made me sad. You ask me not to worry, but how can I not worry when your health is poor again and again and you are faced with the inconvenience of changing houses? Every day I invoke the Mother at the Samadhi to keep you well and protect you from all harm. I am sure her Grace is with you. The greatest boon we can have from her is an inner openness to her and Sri Aurobindo, an openness which grows wider and deeper from moment to moment until finally a supreme experience comes in which at the same time there is an ineffable unmoving oneness with the Divine and an ever eloquent devotion, a ceaselessly appealing worship, a cry from the inmost heart: “I am yours, unite my will with your Will, guide me in everything, give me insight and

¹ The writer’s own explanation makes two attractive points. The first is that he is related to me by a divine dispensation—hence he is “divinely” related. He writes “There is no other witticism on my part.” The second point emerges when he adds “Incidentally, let me tell you what I have been informed. When I was born, my grandmother was returning from her pilgrimage to Dwaraka, Krishna’s birthplace. Before reaching our house she received the news. Immediately she exclaimed ‘Thakur has come to our house!’ ‘Thakur’ means the Divine and this word gives the initial in my name ‘T. Prasad. Kindly wish that this name ‘Thakur Prasad’ may be realised in my life integrally as the ‘Blessings of the Lord’.”

compassion in my dealings with your children, and through all phases of life let a glowing laughing love be at play between us!" (18.1.1991)

*

You are surprised at my saying that all of us are co-travellers towards what somewhere in each of us is a journey's end that has already been reached. Let me try to elucidate this cryptic-seeming statement.

When a disciple is accepted by the Mother she does two things. First, she builds a bridge between our outer self and our true being, the real soul of us and starts a traffic from the one to the other and establishes a future in which the erring human is seen as radiantly arriving at his angelic counterpart. However distant that future may be, it is firmly fixed by the Guru's hand outstretched with a touch of light to bless our dull-headed grope for God. The second thing the Mother does is an emanation of herself to go with us as a subtle companion to our thoughts and feelings, our words and actions, along the meander of our lives. This companion is meant to answer our cries for help and guide us through whatever may happen—the pull of pleasure or the push of pain—towards that "Immortal in the mortal" whom the Rigvedic Rishis sought to awake in us with their revelatory *mantras*—

Sight's sound-waves breaking from the soul's great deep—

and whose realisation by us one day or another is always kept in clear view by that emanation as if this truth of tomorrow were actually a fact of our own past which we are urged to remember. (22.8 1990)

*

What has happened, obliging you to stay at home, is making you apparently stand still, but paradoxically it has pushed you farther on the Great Path by bringing about a stillness within no less than without. Within, you are not standing still but becoming, as it were, a serenity rapidly moving inward and upward by a bit of spontaneous contact with that miraculous aspect of the Supreme Spirit:

Force one with unimaginable rest.

This miraculous aspect is hinted at by you in the image of the "Charioteer". You have written: "There is now more fun in various battles to follow, for I hope that more and more I will be aware who my Charioteer is." I catch a hint also in the expression: "a different kind of quiet joy." A joy that is quiet is one that does

not agitate to move on its own: its quietness lies in giving itself into the hands of a Wisdom at once vast and warm and letting it carry the smiling smallness that we now are to realms beyond our ability to reach. No longer are we at the reins of life: a masked being is holding them and governing the red horse of reality and the white horse of the ideal and bearing us along to what he sees as our destiny. Soon the Charioteer will sweep away his mask and we shall see the radiance that is his face. This face will be like a mirror held before us. We shall wonder how our own face could be so flawless and how this perfection could be at the same time so infinitely distant and so intimately near. Suddenly the knowledge will take shape in our dazzled darkness that the ultimate Truth is an ever-beautiful Other whom the heart in us needs to worship day after day and the Ever-blissful Self of our self in whom our mind can repose eternally. But before this Truth comes alive and fulfils the dream we already have of it we must feel intensely that we do not career forth by our individual initiative: the fact must drive home to us that in "quiet joy" we are being driven by Divine Grace away from a false foreign country to our real Home which was long hidden from us. In short, we must have more and more the sense which is growing in you of our sadhana being led forward by Sri Aurobindo's Light and the Mother's Love rather than by our feverish effort to be a disciple of that Light and our conscious attempt to be a child of that Love. Spontaneously we must find our lives put happily in their guiding hands.

P.S. Your latest letter, handed to me at the Samadhī, has one outstanding burst of felicitous originality: "Why the hell does the inner being continue to be inner still?" You have summed up there, most poignantly, most wittily, the first call of the Aurobindonian Yoga upon us—the "psychic transformation" by which the inner being is no longer something to which we have to go, leaving the outer to its own devices, but a flame and a fragrance of God which has swept into our very surface and pervaded each movement of our external life. This transformation may seem just the initial definitive step of the Integral Yoga, but actually it is one that will prove to be the final basis of the fulfilment of Sri Aurobindo's work in the world. For the Supermind cannot be established on earth except through a soul-suffused body. Short of such a body, the transcendent glories will merely overhang the earth or at best surround it but never become luminous flesh and rapturous blood. (5.9.1990)

*

All the news I get about you is good. I am told you have planned to be up and about in a few days. But I agreed with your messenger that you should not be rash. I added that this was the considered advice of a rash man—that is, of one who had learned (for others) the bitter consequences of rashness.

I have not much to pass on to you today—except a short reflection born of

my daily observation of flowers on my way to the Samadhi from the Ashram gate. Here it is:

“Who says there is no perfection on earth? Look at a full-blown sunflower: a poise of twelve petals publishing themselves around a quiet centre—colour intense, shape clear-cut emerging from that small shadowed source—no flaw anywhere—some archetype visible, some supreme beauty symbolled out—but oh how brief-lived! Soon a slight sagging, a bit of curling up, and in no time the failure of a faultless flower. That is the whole tragedy of living things in our world: a burst of perfection yet no sustainment of splendour. How are we to bring permanence to the marvels life is capable of?

“So far there has been only one way. Art catches up the passing into the perennial—at least it makes the fleeting wonder persist through the ages. But here life has found outside itself the solace for its own transience—an immortality without the bliss of breath. When will the artist find the secret of making his very being a lasting work of art? Surely one who could build the Taj Mahal or paint Ajanta or sculpt the Pietà or pen the *Divine Comedy* has projected immortality from some living core of it within him. Have not the Vedic seers spoken of the Immortal in the mortal? But cannot that hidden godhead render his own embodiment godlike besides bodying it forth from himself by the wizardry of his creative hand? This is the challenge Sri Aurobindo has set us, and with his Truth-Consciousness he has given us the means to start towards meeting it by realising first

A Mind unvisited by illusion's gleams,
 A Will expressive of Soul's deity,
 A Strength not forced to stumble by its speed,
 A Joy that drags not sorrow for its shade.” (17.9.1990)

AMAL KIRAN
 (K.D. SETHNA)

THE ASHRAM CHILDREN AND SRI AUROBINDO'S LIFE

A DREAM-DIALOGUE

(Continued from the issue of March 1991)

SRI AUROBINDO continued: "Suren Banerjee was the undisputed leader of the Bengal Moderates and known as the uncrowned king of Bengal. He was short and thin and middle-aged; his scholarship was vast, his intelligence sharp. He was a fiery speaker and easily held sway over the minds of the Congressmen. As the leader of the Nationalist Party, I had quite a few clashes with him. For instance, at the Hooghly Conference. Members from both the Moderate and the Nationalist Parties were present, and the subject under discussion was Government Reforms. The Moderates were for acceptance of the reforms, we were strongly against. The more the debate, got heated, the more Banerjee grew furious. At that point, I stood up and, having requested our Party members to become calm, explained the issue quite clearly to them and asked them to leave the place quietly. This inflamed the gentleman still more and he shouted, 'The people we older leaders could not tame, this thirty-year-old lad has done! He merely raised a careless finger at them and they followed his lead!' For, you see, it was never my custom to be verbose; restraint and logic always characterised my speeches. But Banerjee too had a magnetic power of his own, and at one time he had even begun veering towards the revolutionaries.

"Our final and most dramatic confrontation with the Moderates took place at the Surat Congress, as a result of which they lost their hold, and the Party was taken over by the Radicals "

"That meeting turned into a regular battle, didn't it?"

"Who told you that?"

"Our teachers. And it was you who—"

(Laughing) "Gave the battle-orders? Fighting and rowdyism! A meek and quiet man like me! Can you believe that? Listen, this is how it happened. The two opposing groups met at Surat. Our opponents were more in number, had name and fame and age on their side. Our group was made up of all unknown men, except for just Tilak, Bepin Pal and me. They had decided on no account to let Tilak speak. But he did. While the speech was in progress, a shoe came flying through the air and hit one of their leaders. With that, the shouting and shrieking began when one of our volunteers asked me what was to be done. I told him to break up the meeting. Fist fights followed, chairs and tables were swung from one side to the other. I am not always entirely non-violent, as you can see.

"This is how our Nationalist Party was formed. You will find that the aims we set before us and the means we decided upon were very much like those which Mahatma Gandhi much later followed. His ideas about boycotting law

courts, schools and foreign goods, of passive resistance or non-violence were all part of our programme. Gandhi's most famous weapon of a revolt based on non-violent non-cooperation was already practised by us. When I began to write in the *Bande Mátaram*, I set down my plan of action very clearly in that paper:

“Our aim was Swaraj, Self-rule and Freedom.

“Our means would be: non-cooperation, passive resistance, national education, self-reliance along with boycott of British goods, fair and proper method of arbitration, and so on. I wrote about all this in article after article in the *Bande Mataram* in order to shatter the dreams the Moderates had woven around themselves, their dreams about the advantages of foreign rule, their faith in British law and justice, their attachment to a Western education. I laid most emphasis on the boycott of British goods and on our need for reliance on indigenous products, because the British had reduced our golden land to abject poverty and slavery not so much by political means as by strangling us through trade and commerce and material domination. My second aim was to reform our Educational System. In Baroda, I had already seen to what extent Western education had harmed the youth of our country, how the brightness of their intelligence had been tarnished and dimmed. That is why I had wanted to start National schools where the education given would help the genius of the race to flower along its own lines. I had hoped to take charge of this new system of education but my arrest made that impossible. Today, after so many years, that dream is moving towards fulfilment, here, in the Ashram. You all have come here to participate in that true education. I do not think I need to say more. Those who know anything about political history will be able to discern how the revolutions of the future are moving largely along the paths indicated by us.

“My participation in the National Movement lasted a few short years only, but the changes I witnessed were extraordinary. And Gandhi made full use of this phenomenon.

“The most glorious change was the new awakening in the nation. The mantra of ‘Bande Mataram’ had lit new flames of hope and energy throughout the land. Men and women, all felt that it was worthwhile to be alive. During the French Revolution, the poet Wordsworth had written:

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven.

“People seemed to feel a similar joy and strength. It is this indestructible power, flaming up repeatedly that led the nation to the threshold of Independence. This, in short, is the story of my political life which led me finally into a prison cell.”

“Why did you say that ‘Bande Mataram’ was a mantra?”

“I was not talking about our paper, but of Bankim's hymn—‘Bande

Mataram'. What I meant was that both the journal and the chanting of the mantra of 'Bande Mataram' had flooded the land with a new, an unimaginable tide of patriotism."

"But why do you call it a mantra? What really is a mantra?"

"Should I not call it a mantra, when the mere uttering of this word had filled a half-moribund race with a new life, reinvigorated it with new powers and capacities, enabling it even to face the hangman with a smile? If this is not a mantra, then what is? In those days of the Swadeshi Movement, the cry of 'Bande Mataram' rent the skies and shook the deepest foundations of the mighty British Empire, terrifying our masters so that they were forced to ban this cry. Even to say it was a punishable offence and yet you ask if it is a mantra? It was this Word, ringing night and day from the lips of revolutionaries, politicians and Non-Cooperators which led us forward on the path of Freedom. Finally, this was then accepted as our National Anthem, and is not that anthem a Mantra? The story of 'Bande Mataram' is marvellous indeed, as marvellous as it is unique in the history of mankind. And yet, none of Bankim's countrymen had realised the greatness of this hymn at the time he wrote it. They had only considered it as a strange mixture of Sanskrit and Bengali. It is a pity Congress gave it a second place "

"Did Bankim really experience what he wrote about the motherland?"

"Of course he must have! How else could he have written that song? It is said that Bankim composed it very fast, in record time. When the editor of the *Bangadarshan* went to ask him for some contribution to his journal, he gave the gentleman this poem. The latter's eyes skimmed over the page which he folded with a condescending 'Not bad'. This comment so irritated Bankim that he took the poem back, saying 'You cannot now understand the significance of this song. You will perhaps do so some day, when I shall no longer be there.' It was after this that the writer inserted this poem in his novel *Anandamath*. Everyone read the book, admired and praised it, but no one remarked upon 'Bande Mataram'. It was Rabindranath Tagore who was the first to sing this song in public at a Congress Meeting, many years later. But the nation forgot about it once again until there came the Partition of Bengal. 'Bande Mataram' was revived anew. This time never to fade, never to die any more. For a while, however, an attempt was made to replace this national anthem by another song, but fortunately it was not quite successful."

"But you didn't explain what a mantra really is!"

"It is not very easy to describe it. A mantra always comes from a higher plane of consciousness and reveals a profound truth, whether that be an ancient truth or a new and future reality. But its most important characteristic is that it expresses much more than the mere substance and meaning of its word. The rhythm and reverberations of its sound can bring one a sense of the infinity whence it came and where it returns. The word and the rhythm are both self-

created and self-fulfilled... I don't know if you understand what I am saying, for instance the word OM."

"Our teacher once gave us an example of a mantra. It was 'Vive la France'. When Germany had conquered France, she had demanded that the German language replace French in all the schools. A village school-teacher had retaliated by writing 'Vive la France' in strong bold letters on the blackboard, though of course a German bullet ripped his body almost instantaneously. But his invincible phrase spread across the land like wildfire, inspiring the French to battle for freedom from the oppressor."

"Yes, such is the power of the mantra. It achieves the impossible. I have already told you about the sixteen-year old lad, Chitta Guhathakurata, whose skull was battered by the blows of the police and yet his lips cried out 'Bande Mataram'. Another boy, Sushil Sen, sang the self-same song while he was being mercilessly whipped; with every lash he shouted aloud 'Bande Mataram'. Satyen, Kanai, Khudiram—all mounted the scaffold chanting this very hymn. Your own Barda's father, Bagha Jatin, died uttering 'Bande Mataram' even as the bullet of the British policeman embedded itself in his breast. History tells us that mantras like this have always given a captive nation the fire and force enabling it to become free.

"All these are instances of the power of the mantra—in the field of nationalism and politics. But its effect in poetry and in the spiritual life is truly miraculous. You have heard about the Rishis of the Vedas and the Upanishads, haven't you, and of the Riks or Shlokas they uttered. A divine hearing had revealed these verses to them, and so it is said that the origin of the Vedic creation is supernatural, *apauruseya*. The undistorted and right utterance of these mantras carries in it the power of spiritual realisation.

"In poetry too, there is sometimes the mantra. In *The Future Poetry* I have said that the poetry of the future will be mantric, like the Vedas and the Upanishads were. As for instance:

न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ।
तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥

'There the sun cannot shine and the moon has no lustre: all the stars are blind: there our lightnings flash not, neither any earthly fire. For all that is bright is but the shadow of His brightness and by His shining all this shines.' "

"The Mother has described your poem 'Rose of God' as mantric. And *Savitri* too, naturally."

"Is that so? Well, that poem and a few others too have come down, in their entirety, from a higher plane. It is my custom, often, to make alterations after I have written my poem, but this particular poem is absolutely flawless, perfect. It is as if it were already composed and arranged elsewhere and came down intact after a slight pull."

“Though we do not understand the poem, the beauty of the diction and the rhythm draws us irresistibly. It captivates us, and we respond to it in a way that is quite unusual.”

“The mantra is primarily a harmony of sounds and that is why it is not always necessary to understand the sense. The waves of sound can generate in you vibrations of light and joy and force and can even draw up your consciousness to a higher plane. Take, for example ‘Bande Mataram’ that we were talking about. If you change it into ‘Mataram bande’, you do not alter the sense at all, but it is no longer a mantra. Similarly the cry of ‘Que la France vive’ will never make your hair stand on end!”

“Then, could we say that it is poetry alone that can express the mantra?”

“Why so? Prose too can do it, though less often.”

“When we read the Mother’s Prayers, we have this kind of experience. Your book *The Mother* too is also extraordinary.”

“Yes, they generate a special force, but not merely through their thought-substance, but also through the sound-effects.”

“But we never realised that!”

“That is because they are prose works. But all great prose must have the power of rhythm and harmony.”

“Your poem ‘A God’s Labour’ also thrills us, though here too the meaning is not always clear. But the rhythm and feeling seem to exceed the words. The very first stanza:

I have gathered my dreams in a silver air
Between the gold and the blue,
And wrapped them softly and left them there,
My jewelled dreams of you!”

“There you are! You have already experienced something of the power of the mantra. Similarly, if you recite aloud the finest lines of very great poems, then you will feel within you the beauty of Sound. As the Vaishnava poet said—‘Through the ear, it shall pierce your soul’. And you will then be able to grasp the core of the mantra or the great poem.

“Now let us go back to the subject in hand.”

“You did not tell us anything about the secret Revolution, about the revolutionary change. What happened? You spoke of Khudiram—was he a nationalist? We have been told that many were sentenced to be hanged for having murdered Englishmen. All this is so new to us.”

“Not only Englishmen, Indians too.”

“Indians too? Why them?”

“Because they sided with the British, with the foreign government. But it isn’t as if I haven’t told you anything about the nationalist movement. I have

done so, something at least. I have also explained that the more I became openly involved in political activities the more my secret revolutionary work slipped out of my hands. And the nationalist movement turned gradually into a violent movement although the government was largely responsible for that. I have described to you the brutalities of the police, the cruel whippings ordered by the magistrates. Naturally the young men would not accept such tyranny for long and the desire for revenge began to flare up in them which led to the making of bombs. Barin was their leader. After the first bomb was made, more young men flocked to him to study the making and handling of bombs. Of them Nolini was one. You could ask him what happened next."

"It's difficult to see him, he's always so busy. You tell us."

(*Laughing*) "But I wasn't there! I have heard that while a young man was examining a bomb, it blew up in his face. It blew up before it touched the ground, the moment it came in contact with the air. And there was no time for the boy to run. At the second attempt, it was an English lady and her daughter who were mistakenly killed in place of the Magistrate. On that occasion one of the boys shot himself dead before the authorities could reach him; the other one was arrested and hanged. Though this violent rebellion was not ultimately successful, the young men who took part in it displayed a courage and patriotism that were no less exceptional than those of the Rajput heroes of yore. The violence continued until Gandhi took over with his non-violent movement. The attack on the Chittagong armoury was its last battle, with women too joining it towards the end. But the violent revolutionaries did not succeed; in fact, most of them were caught. It was only to be expected, wasn't it, for they were vastly outnumbered by the well-equipped government forces.

"But that wasn't the real reason for this failure. It was because the great Force which had come down in our time gradually began to withdraw. That is why they failed. But the Force continued to work. It shook the race awake in such a way that the British found it impossible to continue being in India."

"How did you get caught?"

"After the bomb went off, the police were very shaken and raids and searches began to multiply. They heard about the Manicktolla Garden. That was where Barin's boys used to meet, either to make guns or just to talk. Barin was captured with the rest of his fellows, and so was I along with them. This was because I was Barin's elder brother, a revolutionary leader whom Nevinson, a British journalist, had described after having met me as 'The man who never laughs: the most dangerous man in the British Empire' (*laughter*). That most dangerous man was finally arrested one fine early morning when he was fast asleep in the house he lived in with his wife and sister. The police chief had the house surrounded by well-armed gun-toting constables, himself entering my room with a loaded revolver in his hand! As if I was a dangerous criminal who might become violent or try some daring escape! And when he found that I was

nothing but a peace-loving Bengali who was perfectly willing to do as I was told, he might even have thought that I was up to some tricks!”

“But why did the police arrest you? Were there bombs and guns hidden in your house?”

“Well, I found myself obliged to spend one whole year in prison, even though the most thorough searches never revealed anything—no hidden weapons, no guns and bombs, in my house. If there had been, I would surely have been hanged. Barin almost was, and I was not only his elder brother but also his leader. Until then, they had found no concrete proof to enable them to arrest me, all they could do was to strongly suspect me.”

“I am terrified of jails. The pictures we see in films of prison-life... ugh!”

“In my time too many used to react in the same way. I was perhaps the first to feel something different. There was no fear.”

“Didn’t anyone else in your family feel frightened?”

“I don’t know about the rest of my family, but I am sure my wife and my sister were terrified. If I had been afraid, how could I have taken part in the revolution? Besides, in those days, I had attained a high point in my yoga...”

“You were already doing yoga in those days?”

“Why should you be surprised? Is it because you believe yoga is something very different from politics? I think I have told you that already in 1907 Lele had helped me realise Nirvana. From that time on, all my activities proceeded from that plane of experience. I was not the only one, however, who followed the yogic discipline. Many of the political leaders were either yogis themselves or were disciples of yogis.”

“Please, what is Nirvana like?”

“Nirvana is a state of absolute peace. Haven’t you noticed the expression of deep, infinite peace on the face of the Buddha? After having attained Nirvana, Buddha returned to active life. His actions and decisions brought about a series of great and far-reaching changes in the world, but they all stemmed from this peace and quietude. We are told that he had become free from fear and worry, from longing and desire. In fact, even a mad elephant became quiet and still in his presence. I am glad you asked this question. Now we can talk a little about yoga.”

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

(Translated by Jhumur from the Bengali)

SOME EPISODES IN THE LIFE OF AN “EXTRAORDINARY GIRL”

A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION

(Continued from the issue of March 1991)

A Famous Astrologer Predicts my Marriage

A FAMOUS Bengali astrologer lived in Calcutta who could declare people's past, present and future. A relative told my mother about him, saying, "Let's go and see this man. I have something to ask him."

Mother's blunt answer was, "I don't believe in such charlatans. Besides, what's the use of knowing the future when whatever God has written on my forehead is going to happen? I see no point in learning about it from any other source."

In spite of these objections, she finally agreed to go, insisting that she would ask no questions of her own.

As soon as they arrived at the astrologer's, the relative began asking question after question. When it appeared that there would be no end to it, mother lost patience and said, "Let's go now. My daughter is all alone." The remark caught the astrologer's attention. "Your daughter?" he asked. "But she is not alone. She is enjoying the company of a friend who is reading to her a letter. But this is a secret she will not divulge to you. Could I once meet her?"

Intrigued, my mother thought to herself, "My daughter keeps a secret from me? I can't believe it!"

She and her relative hurried home, and the first thing mother asked me was if my friend who was a frequent visitor to our house had been to see me. But when she went on to ask whether this lady had read to me a letter and what the letter contained, I was not only surprised but annoyed. "How do you know?" I shot back. "Who told you?"

"The astrologer—"

"My friend has forbidden me to tell you about it," I replied. Then with rising anger I added, "What business has he to tell you these things? It's very wrong of him."

Undeterred, mother persisted. "He wants to meet you just once."

"Never!" I exclaimed.

I did not know that the astrologer had also asked my mother for my date and hour of birth, and that she had given them to him. With this information he had drawn up my horoscope, but had told my mother not to tell me about it. He even mentioned that after three days I would ask about it myself.

On that very day, a friend of mine came and told me, "I saw your mother

reading your horoscope. As soon as she saw me, she tried to hide it.”

Enraged, I went to my mother and burst out, “Why did you have my horoscope done without asking me? What right has this man to prepare it behind my back?”

My mother replied that he had said my horoscope was extraordinary. “He has not only asked you to see him,” she explained, “but says he will be waiting for you.”

I became red with anger, but later, during the afternoon, I changed my mind. “Let me go once,” I thought.

When I reached his house and rang the bell, he opened the door himself and welcomed me “Come, I have been expecting you,” he said.

I was still simmering with rage and retorted rudely, “Why have you made my horoscope without my consent?”

“I don’t know about the right or the wrong of it,” he answered calmly. “But I felt like doing it, and what I divined seems to be true. Very strange, this horoscope of yours! Very rare indeed! On the one hand it is extraordinary in its promise, on the other it is a picture of terrible suffering. It has a striking resemblance to the horoscope of a great yogi. Not only that—at your ‘auspicious moment’ of birth, Brihaspati was in the ascendant, which is an excellent sign.”

“How,” I interrupted, getting interested, “if there is so much suffering in store for me?”

He ignored my question. “Listen further,” he went on. “You will have to marry.”

“Marry? I will not!”

“You have got to marry. You are destined to become a mother and you will be one whether you marry or not.”

“You mean to say that if I don’t marry I will have an illegitimate child?”

“Yes, I can even lay a wager on it.”

“But why?”

“That I don’t know. It could be that in your previous birth you had a desire for a child, which remained unfulfilled. In spite of this, you will not have a happy marriage.”

“If I won’t have a happy marriage and am doomed to suffer, kindly tell me what good does Brihaspati do to me. These enigmatic predictions are just idle chatter and I can’t take them seriously.”

It was as though the man had not even heard me.

“Brihaspati will serve you in two excellent ways. First, it has set a flame burning in you. This is a symbol of aspiration for God and Brihaspati will keep it burning so that it can lead you to God. Secondly, whoever goes against you and tries to harm you will fare badly. Even if you yourself do something wrong, Brihaspati will protect you. You need not even aspire for God. He will be with you always and stand by you in good times and bad.”

"And in spite of this, I shall suffer all through my life?"

"No, in your later years you will be at peace."

At that moment a very handsome young man entered, and sat apart from us on one side of the room. I glanced at him enquiringly, but the astrologer told him, "Please leave us for the time being. I am having a serious talk with this girl."

When the man had left, the astrologer turned to me and asked, "How do you find him?"

"Quite good," I answered.

"He is the man you are going to marry."

"What?" I exclaimed, stunned.

"Listen, I did not call him deliberately. His coming was a coincidence, don't you see?"

"No, I don't! Nor do I believe you."

"You will understand afterwards. Meanwhile, I assure you your marriage with him is settled. Your mother and relatives will bring it about. But I must repeat, you must not expect it to be a happy marriage. In fact, you are destined to marry one who will turn out a scoundrel."

"What nonsensical and contradictory stories you are thrusting upon me!"

"I can't help it. They are all in your horoscope. People in whom a fire is burning cannot have a happy worldly life. Their destiny is to seek a divine existence. Your horoscope has no parallel in my experience. I have truly never seen anything like it."

Strange indeed! Every word of the astrologer's predictions has come true.

(To be continued)

THE SEEKING AND THE FINDING

A PAGE FROM A WESTERNER'S LIFE

I WENT from the U.S.A. to Spain and from Spain to London looking for the Person who would show me the "Way". After a year in London, a year of meeting many people and of various experiences, I still did not find the Teacher. Among the friends I came to know was an Indian. Circumstances so unfolded as to necessitate my departure from London. Where to go next? Where is the answer? India? I didn't know much about India, but I chose to go and continue to search there. Having an Indian friend made it more convenient.

I arrived in the strange land without too many preconceptions but expecting to find "realized" people all over the place. It so happened that I found myself in a well-off circle of Indians in the Punjab. I went to cocktail parties and drove around in chauffeur-driven cars and wondered why I had to come all this way to do the same things I could do in Europe. I didn't want such a life. Had I come to India to see an imitation of the West? What a disappointment!

I explained to my friend saying I wanted to see the real India, meet men who knew about the Self and the soul and how to change one's being. In response he suggested I go to stay with a certain religious man of high standing whom he knew.

So off I went to the town (still in the Punjab) where he lived—only to discover he was not at home for the week. I stayed anyway. His grown-up children were my hosts during my time there.

Once I was talking with his daughter in her room, and her book-shelf attracted me. I looked at the books and pulled one out, a thin book without any title on the spine. I kept it out to read in the evening when alone.

When I began to read I couldn't believe my eyes. It was so powerful, the words, the experiences, the aspirations. It was as if someone understood what I was feeling and thinking and living and wrote it down. As I read further I was emotionally overwhelmed. The writer had written most clearly, most vividly what I was going through, and more. I stayed awake for hours reading this book.

In the morning I asked about the author. The book was simply named *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*. Then I was told about the Ashram in Pondicherry. My hosts were very helpful and planned for me to go to their sister in Madras and then from Madras to Pondicherry.

When I returned to my friend I was in a happier mood. I was going—going toward something special now. Shortly I began my journey south. Everything went well. I arrived in Pondicherry and knew I had found "it" or "it" had found me. The search was over. This was the place where the soul could grow.

Now the decision was to be taken whether to stay on or go away. Since the finding had been done, the search, the life of looking had ceased and the time for

commitment had come. I stayed five days according to schedule and returned to Madras to continue my travels in the South of India. After three weeks of moving about I was in Madras once more and this was the time for the choice.

There was a car going to Pondicherry the following day and I was either going with it or going to Calcutta and soon back to Europe. I still had not decided after lying awake the whole night, thinking. When the dawn came I was getting worried. As I started to dress, suddenly the answer came: "Go to Pondicherry." It wasn't a thought, it wasn't even me. It had nothing to do with all the mind's work through the night. It was something calm and clear—outside of me and yet deep inside. So I came to the Ashram.

M.

BECOME!

LET "Arise!" and "Awake!" leap beyond
 Into the magic of "Become";
 Let His Will's Sorcery revel in you
 To fulfil the marvel of this term.

Colour fascinates the whims of His Will
 Painting the events in flow;
 Eternal Child's is the playful hand—
 The canvas heavens aglow.

He is a lover of hide and seek
 With himself tip-toeing the mazy course.
 A sudden turn!—and a reunion!—
 The Playmate's clasping force.

The path is mined with danger, and lurk
 The devils to hijack the seeker's flight;
 To hose the fire with showering dark
 Is their uttermost delight.

Let the ghosts of fear be dissolved
 By aspiration's torch aflame;
 Let the heart's cave be lucent with the Presence enshrined
 And the lips repeat the beloved Name.

The spirit of this heroic adventure
 Is the bravery of Bhisma's calm.
 Do you yearn to participate?
 "Become" is the ultimate aim!

SATADAL

WHY AM I DRAWN TOWARDS SRI AUROBINDO?

ONCE a friend of mine asked me why I go to Pondicherry so often. I did not give him a reply then; but the question sank into my subconscious. Later when I was in a relaxed reverie, it emerged and posed itself with a heckling attitude. In that mood of reminiscence my mind questioned me: Why are you drawn towards Sri Aurobindo?

My answer was: There are a thousand and one reasons, known and unknown. But I state a few of them that spontaneously occurred to me, in answer to the question.

They may not have a general appeal to all, but people of my temperament may derive some pleasure or profit from them. They are:

1) Sri Aurobindo has given a global and a comprehensive definition of God and Godhead, rather the Divine and the Divinity. He explained not only the known and unknown aspects of God, but also the connecting links between the two in a most convincing and acceptable way to my mind. His concept of the unity of God is perfect without omissions or exclusions. He left no scope for doubt or a doubting question.

2) He gave a definite aim to my life, transcending the limits of the ego. It is not a mere idea or theory but a plan of action to reach my goal; his Integral Yoga is satisfying to all the parts of my being and their demands.

3) He described the visible world very vividly and with an equal vividness the invisible worlds. He laid bare their location, their function and established a bridge of understanding between the two. If we develop the capacity we can ourselves pass to and fro, from one to the other with ease and pleasure.

4) He revealed the big sweep of the human mind ranging from the physical mind to the overmind; the various grades and their capacities including the mutual reactions and influences among them. While soaring in the mind regions, he did not lose himself in their immensity, but laid threadbare the limitations of this wonderful instrument in a clear and indisputable way disclosing its partial successes and final failures to bring enduring happiness to humanity and the human individual.

5) He showed the origin of the universe and our planet therein. He convincingly accounted for the pain and suffering in the world. While showing the purpose of this creation, he vividly described the process of evolution which it is following, and disclosed the aim towards which our world and the universe are progressing.

6) He did not discourage us with the ignorance and darkness, the mother of miseries, as a thing that cannot be changed; but as a scientist he explained the steps to be taken to outgrow the ignorance and darkness and enter into the Light, Knowledge and Joy eternal. He is the hope of man, nay, of the whole world of beings.

7) He saw the entire past, picked up the best of it, merged it in the present and moulded the future for the human society as well as the individual. He saw Time and the Timeless, the border between the two and discovered the openings for man the creature in Time to ascend into the Timeless and for the spirit of the Timeless to descend into Time, to lift man from the bounds of transient phenomena.

8) Like a scientist in a laboratory he held up every thing, scanned it on his invisible spiritual dissection table and discovered the weak points. In religion, he saw its ceremonial rites, conventional attitudes and how they block the free progress of the soul. He laid a broadway without fencings and denominations. In philosophy, he disclosed how only a partial view of the Truth is open to the intellect. In the traditional Yogas he saw the narrow paths, created by one-track minds and how ultimately they fail to achieve the perfect perfection he conceived.

9) His writings and teachings are for all ages of men, for all levels of consciousness. His call to the higher life and to perfection is aimed at all grades and levels of human beings, children, youths, adults, and grown-ups as well as the old; and also at the theist and atheist without distinction and at all the diverse attitudes of humanity. It is a comprehensive call, with a universal appeal.

10) There is no human activity he left untouched; his touch was for a new turn and refinement, invigorating the old stuff into fresh movements.

11) He is an analyst not for destruction, but for a greater synthesis, an all-inclusive harmonisation.

12) He is not a separatist of the mundane and the spiritual, the inner and the outer, the perishable and the imperishable; but a seer who could perceive the continuity behind the apparent, the fissiparous, the contradictory, and discover the hidden links and bridges.

13) He is not a revolutionary for chaos by destroying the established institutions and systems, but one who new-creates the things destroyed. His destruction is only a forerunner of the reconstruction that is at its heels.

14) It is he who could say that because God is infinite, human progress and perfection are equally infinite. He boldly stated that man is only a transitional being and that a new species is under preparation to emerge from humanity. His vision is vast and clear and contagiously charming.

15) He not only saw and said a lot about the Supermind and the supra-mental being, but he actually brought it down into himself, defying all laws of Nature and prepared the ground for proving its existence to the naked eye of even a sceptic.

16) He is a unique guru, who leads the seeker without his knowing; and demands no special qualities of the head or heart, except flawless faith, and a simple smiling sincerity towards the Divine and the guru. The weaknesses, the incapacities or even the revolts of the disciple cannot alienate his patient

and sympathetic tolerance and lead.

17) He is a friend, philosopher and guide to one and all, be he a politician, a social-reformer, an artist, a literary worker, a craftsman, a thinker, a scientist, or a pandit of religion or any branch of knowledge; and he is something more which we cannot define.

18) He is a prophet of consciousness, the fundamental substance of the manifest and the unmanifest. He distinguished minutely its various concentrations at different levels of the worlds and beings and things therein, along with a clear and vivid description of their varied functions. He thus opened new vistas of knowledge unknown.

19) He is an Avatar, who has come down to cut new paths for the soul to grow without pain to new heights and pastures of profound potentiality.

20) He is a child to children, a boy to boys, a co-student to students, a co-teacher to teachers, a guru to seekers. He comes down to our level and makes himself approachable by one and all.

21) Above all, he is a most charming, bewitching as well as magnificent and indefinable personality; once seen he can never be forgotten.

*

One may ask how to know any one of the things narrated of him; particularly when the popular belief is that Sri Aurobindo's writings are difficult to breakthrough and understand. It is like a man shivering with cold on the bank of the river in which he has come to bathe and hesitates on account of the chill of the waters. One has to put oneself to the study of his writings.

The Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, who is no other than the Avatar of Para-Shakti, is also his own Shakti. She is the first and the best commentator on his works. In simple and lucid language she unravelled the mysteries and treasures of his thought. If with her light we approach Sri Aurobindo, everything will be clear to our minds. She expounded new ways of reading, *i.e.*, with the heart more than the mind, which reveals to our intellect the Truth and Light embedded in his writings.

M. SHRIRAMULU

A REVEALING LETTER

This letter is valuable for the extraordinary experiences it reveals. And they are all the more extraordinary because they are of a person lately come to Yoga and just a visitor to the Ashram. The experiences themselves are extensive in their scope, covering as they do both the higher and the inner ranges and touching even the physical being. The letter was not written with any view to publicity but it is worth publishing to show how the spiritual power of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is at work in various ways and carries on the process of change of consciousness in spite of their physical absence amongst their followers.

GOT your letter about 3 weeks back. I must apologize for not writing earlier. My meeting with Amal Kiran was short but fruitful. I told him of some of my experiences and the progress I had made after he had talked with me on an earlier occasion. The last time when I met him he saw in me a lack of *samatā*, a wide calm is what he felt I needed to stabilize my experiences. He had asked me to invoke Sri Aurobindo's presence with its special aspect of wide calm. No sooner than I left him I concretely felt Sri Aurobindo's presence all around me, enveloping me with His vast calm. Subsequently, this deep calm, an absolute solid Peace (stilling even the pores of my body!) has been descending quite regularly. My aspiration has been steadily mounting and experiences, quite powerful, have been coming by Her Grace.

I told Amal Kiran of the following experience although in a very sketchy manner.

I have been sensing a very concrete nexus between the overhead and the heart-centre. I have regularly been taken up into an ascending series of planes whose special natures and differences have been indicated to me by light-intensities which I have seen in meditation. Usually after a gradual ascent I have been bathed in a golden-white light from overhead accompanied by powerful downward descents of the Mother's Force. I watch these movements without interference from a Witness Consciousness.

During these days a spontaneous prayer had arisen in me and I have been invoking Sri Aurobindo overhead and the Mother in my heart-centre. The Force acts in my heart (initially felt as an intense pressure making its way deeper into the heart-regions). I have experienced a deep Ananda, an ineffable softness and a spontaneous outflow of a movement surrendering myself to the Mother.

One such day I was given the precise knowledge and means to offer up my vital movements and this method has proved extremely effective, especially in an attempt towards a permanent conversion of consciousness. Till about a year back, the experiences were of a quite different nature. They were powerful but essentially vertical movements of the Force, sometimes even down to the

physical. This seems the Mother's method of paving the way, clearing initial debris for a freer action of the Shakti in its all-round movement. The action did bring up a lot of mud, often suffocating, but by Her Grace I have clung to Her feet.

Of late, the movement is full of calm, and has been horizontal, deeper. I do still experience Agni in my physical, but the Force is essentially acting from the head down to the vital being. I feel that I am much closer to the Mother in my heart; I am keenly aware of the psychic influence in my actions but I realise that the goal is hardly near. Overhead, the mind centres do seem liberated and I find myself above for longer stretches in the day, contacting the Shakti and I perceive often a direct action of the Will.

So much for my experiences. I couldn't tell many things to Amal Kiran because of lack of time. I do not know if I have expressed myself precisely enough.

(27 December 1990)

A VISITOR

TWO SONNETS

TO NIGHT

MYSTERIOUS Night! when our first parent knew
Thee from report divine, and heard thy name,
Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,
This glorious canopy of light and blue?
Yet 'neath a curtain of translucent dew,
Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,
Hesperus with the host of heaven came,
And lo! Creation widened in man's view.

Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed
Within thy beams, O sun! or who could find
Whilst fly and leaf and insect lay revealed,
That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us blind!
Why do we then shun death with anxious strife?
If Light can thus deceive, wherefore not Life?

JOSEPH BLANCO WHITE (1775-1841)

*This sonnet was praised by Coleridge as the finest in the language from every point of view.
basic theme, intellectual development, imaginative design, verbal felicity.*

AERONAUT TO HIS LADY

'I
Through
Blue
Sky
Fly
To
You.
Why?

Sweet
Love,
Feet
Move
So
Slow!'

FRANK SIDGWICK (1879-1939)

This sonnet may surely be ranked as the shortest and sweetest, the most winsomely witty.

GLOSSARY FOR THE WORD-WEARY

ARE you fed up with mopping up revenues, flushing out ultras, cleaning up corruption, giving sops to the private and nods to the public sector, hailing Sharad Pawar on his 50th or 51st birthday, tinkering with the Bofors gun, standing in queue, yielding a ministerial berth to Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav for bungling the vexed Ram Janmabhoomi issue?

If so, you are word-weary, a common Indian condition. What you need is the Superior Person's Glossary: a new and improved vocabulary, powerful but somewhat obscure, to be liberally sprinkled at cocktail parties, Doordarshan interviews, in the company of intellectuals, politicians, industrialists *et al.* The list below provides practical guidance on how best to use these difficult words in many real-life situations, so that society acknowledges you as a Superior Person, not because your arguments are more cogent, but because they are less intelligible.

Abecedarian a.—(i) Arranged in alphabetical order, (ii) elementary, devoid of sophistication. This glossary may be considered by some to fit both applications.

Abecedarian Insult, An—“Sir, you are an apogenous, bovaristic, coprolalial, dasypygal, excerebrose, facinorous, gnathonic, hircine, ithyphallic jumentous, kyphotic, labrose, mephitic, napiform, oligophrenial, papuliferous, quisquilian, rebarbative, saponaceous, thersitical, unguinous, ventripotent, wlatosome, xylocephalous, yirning zoophyte ” Translation: “Sir, you are an impotent, conceited, obscene, hairy-buttocked, brainless, wicked, toadying, goatish, indecent, stable-smelling, hunchbacked, thick-lipped, stinking, turnip-shaped, feeble-minded, pimply, trashy, repellent, smarmy, foul-mouthed, greasy, gluttonous, loathsome, wooden-headed, whining, extremely low form of animal life.”

Acerebral a.—Without a brain. A word for which there would appear to be no use, since no entity could in fact possess this attribute. Recent research into the central nervous system of politicians has however conclusively demonstrated the need for such a word.

Aprosexia n.—Inability to concentrate. Not, as might be incautiously assumed, aprex-sex activities. Useful when completing the ‘nature of illness’ section on your sick-leave application.

Arcadia n.—an idealised rural locality known for its simple and quiet life. The perfect description of Amethi, Bhondsi and Meham.

Arcane a.—Secret, hidden. An excellent example of a Superior Word, that is, one that is on the margin of recognition for most people, is known to many, but used by few. The correct word to describe the machinations of Chandraswami.

Belomancy n.—Predicting the future by the use of arrows. Market research now uses this infallible method to predict ratings of blockbuster television serials

such as *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and of headbuster scenic tours conducted by Messrs. V. H. P. Ratha Yatras Inc

Biggin n.—A silver coffee pot with a separate container which holds the coffee as it is heated Always make a point of asking your hostess at least once during the evening if she has a biggin.

Boondoggle v. or n.—To carry out valueless or extremely trivial work in order to convey the impression that one is busy. Work so carried out. Instead of commiserating with one's friendly I.T.O. on his alleged work-load, the Superior Person will sympathise over his 'burden of boondoggle.'

Claquer n.—a person paid to applaud at operas, plays, recitals; in India, at political rallies.

Contradistinction n —Why say 'in contrast with' when you can say 'in contradistinction to'?

Dactylogram n —Fingerprint A casual reference to your having been invited by the authorities to let them have your dactylograms may give the impression that you are a distinguished World Bank economist who is called in by the government from time to time in a consultative capacity

Defenestration n.—The act of throwing someone or something out of a window When you next sup with Nana Chudasama, you may tut-tut, "Yes, yes, defenestration of garbage is a favourite Indian pastime "

Discalceate a.—The Superior Person's word for barefooted From the Latin *calceus*, a foot. A word reserved for use at cocktail parties where M. F. Hussain is in attendance.

Dysrhythmia n —Jet Lag. Never say "The minister air-dashed to Delhi"; refer humourously, instead, to "his penchant for daily Delhi dysrhythmia "

Fabulist n.—An elegant euphemism for *liar*. Can be fearlessly used to politely refer to persons involved in the Bofors case

Itaiitai n —A bone disease caused by cadmium. Said to be derived from the Japanese equivalent for 'Ouch, ouch!' The interest of this to the Superior Person lies in the possibility of coining similar meaningful new words in English for other diseases Thus, 'Eek, eek!' for arachniphobia (fear of spiders), 'Er, er!' for aphasia (loss of speech); 'Unh, Unh!' for constipation; 'Oh no!' for impotence; and so on.

Kakistocracy n —Government by the worst citizens; doesn't refer to India, which, in contradistinction, is a **democracy**.

Lucripetous a.—Money-hungry. Suitable for muttered aspersions upon salespersons and government servants, when in their presence.

Megapod n —Having large feet. Useful if you wish to show consideration for the feelings of a police officer, while keeping the conversation at a factual level

Pogonophile n.—A lover of beards. An endearing nickname for our Bhondsı Baba, the present Prime Minister.

Nescience n.—Ignorance. The Insult Concealed: “Words fail to express our beloved leader’s profound nescience.”

Saponaceous a.—Soapy.

Saporous a.—Tasty, flavourful. When introduced to the beautiful couple who have just made their impressive entrance, you exclaim admiringly: “Ah how perfect! The marriage of the saponaceous and the saporous!” Their evening is tormented by the need to remember the two words until they can get home and look them up in the dictionary; and when they do, they find themselves plagued by uncertainty as to which term you were applying to which person.

Finally, having mastered this glossary, if you find that people shun you as if you have an infectious disease, take heart. Remember these words of Oscar Wilde: “Be warned in time, James, and remain, as I do, incomprehensible; to be great is to be misunderstood.”

(With thanks to Peter Bowler)

SANGITA P. ADVANI

(With acknowledgments to The Sunday Times, 23.12.1990, p. 10.)

THY PRESENCE

My happiness knows no bound,
Thy footfall when I hear;
My heart-beat is in rhyme
With that ringing sound.

Soon I wake and see,
My narrow room is dark,
The only door is locked;
Where will I welcome Thee?

Hastily I come
Out of my darkened room;
And soon the stepping stops,
And all grows suddenly calm.

I stand and weep alone.
The sound again I hear,
From my own room it comes,
I rush back with no moan

The room is full of light,
Who could have lit the lamp?
Whence does the fragrance waft?
None is in my sight.

Thy Presence yet in me
I feel, O Gracious Lord!
Thou hast come in at last!
But where shall I worship Thee?

Let my heart be Thy seat,
Thy Golden Throne, my Lord!
With my rolling rapturous tears,—
May I wash Thy feet!

SAMAR BASU

ASWAPATHI AND THE MARUTS

SOME INSIGHTS ON THE FATHER OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of March 1991)

As the strength of the Maruts is twofold—the power of knowledge and the power of action with a nature to expand and grow—the seers appeal to them to strike down the evil enemy who opposes the forces of light. The seeker on the mystic path feels a core of obscurity, a part that does not follow and keep pace with other parts in their growth, somewhere in his being. It is given to the obstinate rule of inertia, shot through and through with opaque masses of unconsciousness and opposes all infiltration of light and casts its shadow on the rest of the being. This is the darkness concealed to the outer view, lying embedded in the denser layers of the physical being. The dynamic Maruts eliminate it from the scene of action.

Their great work is enacted through the experience of Aswapathy. In the canto 'The House of the Spirit and the New Creation' in Book III, Aswapathy waits like an incarnate hope for Her strength on earth. But he feels 'the ignorant No' in the origin of things.

Even in himself survived and hid from his view
Still something in his earthly being kept
Its kinship with the Inconscient whence it came.¹

When the human nature surrenders completely, the Maruts who are wedded to the weal of him who sustains them with his aspiration, prayers and self-offering, fight the core of darkness and aid in the total transformation. King Aswapathy's total surrender makes this new creation possible.

Powerful in themselves, the Maruts are led in battle by One yet more powerful—Indra. The aspiring Thought-forces energised by the dynamism of purified life-energy strive constantly to reach and spread themselves on the higher and yet higher reaches of mind till they arrive at the levels of the pure Mind whose Lord is Indra.

.. If the Maruts, the Thought-powers, attempt to force their advance direct to their goal, bypassing and ignoring the Power of the Divine Intelligence in manifestation; . . then there is an opposition from the Universal Power presiding over the "realm of pure intelligence through which the ascending soul passes into the divine Truth."²

¹ *Savitri* Bk 3, Ct 3, p 368

² Sri Aurobindo quoted in p 99 *Aditi and Other Deities in the Veda*, by M P Pandit Chapter 'The Maruts' (II)

So the seeker on the path of Immortality should not endeavour to shoot up by sheer thought-force without a prior and proper fulfilment in the Truth of the Pure Mind. It may result in a consequent disharmony and arrest of progress. The proper role of the Maruts is to activate the being of man in general and specially the thought-being supported by prana. They subject the movements of mind and subtilised life to a ceaseless pressure of aspiration, rectification, purification and help in orienting and converging them towards the highest heights of the mental skies where Indra, the Lord of Swar, is, as it were, waiting for the aspiring soul.

It is Indra, the Lord of Thoughts, who is to take up the processed thought movements and give them their fulfilling completeness, confirm them in the status proper to his own realm of divine illumination and once they are thus ready, proceed to win for men the undying light of the Sun of Truth. In *Savitri*, Aditi, Svarvati, the supreme consciousness-force of the Lord, who brings forth the whole existence, is described as awaiting the 'seeking spirit'. So, having ascended so far, Aswapathy surrenders his boundless mind and silent heart 'at her feet', completely entranced, prone. From here, the Mother takes charge of all the activities directly and it is only by her direct descent that the Yoga gets perfected in *Savitri*. When *Savitri* descends through his efforts, the role of Aswapathy becomes secondary. Indra and Agni are the two major Gods associated with the Maruts. Sage Vishwamitra declares: 'Theirs is the glory of Fire.' (Rv III. 26.5) Sri Aurobindo clearly indicates this association of the Maruts and Agni in *Savitri*.

The birth of *Savitri* is described as 'The Birth and childhood of the Flame' and 'The Growth of the Flame', etc. Aswapathy's mission is to prepare for her arrival and hand her to the Yajamana, the soul of the world, who is ready for her arrival by his perfection. When *Savitri* descends, Aswapathy gives her full scope to express herself and prays that she and Satyavan may challenge the mask of Death and solve the problem of life forever.

So, Aswapathy is the seer, the embodiment of the dynamic life energy with unflinching and unparalleled strength and distinguished wisdom. His energy eliminates the defects of weakness, incapacity and incompleteness, displaces the elements of ignorance, falsehood and error. As the ascending being blessed by the Maruts, he overcomes the ills of want and limitations of ignorance and obscurity in the subtler bodies of life, mind and antahkarana (inner being). The disharmonies between the different parts of the being—the outer and the inner, the higher and the lower—which are extremely galling and exasperating, are overcome by Aswapathy. For Nature, he is the symbol of the Maruts, the tiller and toiler who prepares the way for the descent of the pure mind. He is the pure, wholesome and felicitous healer of the ills of the mind, afflictions of the life-being and sicknesses of the soul.

With the liberation of these two important parts of his, viz , his life-being

and the mind-being, from subjection to inertia, limitation, incapacity, ignorance and falsehood, the worshipper is on the assured step towards the Vedic immortality which is "a vast beatitude, a large enjoyment of the divine and infinite existence reposing on a perfect union between the Soul and Nature; the soul becomes King of itself and its environment, conscious on all its planes, master of them, with Nature for its bride delivered from divisions and discords into an infinite and luminous harmony."¹

One may see both Aswapathy and Satyavan as the life-being and mind-being of the worshipper, purified and deserving the divine descent.

Under the leadership of Indra, the Maruts repel all the forces of darkness and the Rishis seek their protection.

There are plenty of malevolent elements in Nature opposed to the progress of man—forces and beings operating on the physical as well as the supra-physical levels, trying to eat up what man has achieved in his endeavour.

... These are the Dasyus, the Rakshasas who infest the route of the Traveller, who, when they do not find sufficient opening in his armour for surreptitious entrance, do not hesitate to launch a frontal attack on his person at some stage or other. The Maruts with their piercing sights and luminous strengths can be safely trusted to spot and deal with them.²

The frontal attack of Death on Satyavan, the fortunate being, and the decisive victory of the forces of light, forces of pure Truth like Savitri, enact the possible danger and its elimination. The way is cleared for the decisive realisation—the advent and establishment of the supreme light which puts an end to the era of false lights and twilights once for all. Thus, in the dawn of the eternal day, Aswapathy is the first ray, and in the victory of Savitri as the embodiment of Indra, Svarvati or the supreme consciousness Force on the forces of darkness, Aswapathy is the embodiment of the Maruts or the purified life and thought forces.

(Concluded)

B. VARALAKSHMI

¹ Sri Aurobindo quoted p 67, chapter 'The Maruts' in *Aditi and Other Deities in the Veda* by M P Pandit

² p 106-107 'The Maruts', (III) *Aditi and Other Deities in the Veda* by M P Pandit

THE DRAMATIC ART OF SRI AUROBINDO IN *RODOGUNE*

(Continued from the issue of March 1991)

ANTIOCHUS whose only portion of life was death and defeat from the very beginning is nonetheless overawed by the great mystery of life, of his own life rather:

“Wherefore were thoughts gigantic
With which I came into my mother ready-shaped
If they must end in the inglorious tomb?”²¹

This is a great question, in fact. Man knows not the end of life. Only he hopes to gain and nurture ‘gigantic thoughts’ and immortal longings. Sri Aurobindo, genuine poet as ever, creates in Antiochus a human personality exalted to the highest level of imagination and grandeur, the very type of ‘man’s unconquerable mind’. In an essay in *The Future Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo has expressed beautifully his vision of dramatic creation: “And if it is asked what in a word is the essential purpose of all this creation, I think we might possibly say that drama is the poet’s vision of some part of the world-act in the life of the human soul, it is in a way his vision of Karma, in an extended and very flexible sense of the word, and at its highest point it becomes a poetic rendering or illustration of the Aeschylean *drasanti pathein*, ‘the doer shall feel the effect of his act,’ in an inner as well as an outer, a happy no less than an austere significance, whether that effect be represented as psychological or vital, whether it comes to its own through sorrow and calamity, ends in a judgement by laughter or finds an escape into beauty and joy, whether the presentation be tragic or comic or tragi-comic or idyllic.”²² Tragedy, according to Sri Aurobindo, has to have ‘its point of loud detonation’.²³

In this ‘loud detonation’ bodies perish certainly, Antiochus is ordained to die. But his soul will not be extinguished. The soul itself does not belong to any worldly master. So from the snares of the body, the soul springs to eternity. Antiochus has a feeling like this. He is advised by Eremite not to spurn proud defeat or high death, because the gods accept them sternly. Antiochus tells him that he will accept both, but not submissively. Eremite then foretells the inevitable:

“Break then, thou hill
Unsatisfied with thy own height The gods
Care not if thou resist or if thou yield;
They do their work with mortals. To the Vast

Whence thou, O ravening, strong and hungry lion,
 Overleaping cam'st the iron bars of Time,
 Return! Thou hast thy tamers. God of battles!
 Son of Nicanor! Strong Antiochus!
 Depart and be as if thou wert not born
 The gods await thee in Antioch."²⁴

Antiochus is driven on by Fate, as it were. His decision to go to Antioch is not corroborated by Philoctetes who advises him.

"Go not to Antioch.
 I see Death smiling, waving you to go,
 But do not."²⁵

Antiochus is firm, and will not hearken to him, because, as he says, Fate beckons him and he shall not shrink from her. Philoctetes exclaims in despair:

"O sun, thou goest rushing to the night
 Which shall engulf thee."²⁶

Even Phayllus has to take cognizance of Antiochus' heroic personality. He says,

"He is too great a man
 To be a subject: nor is that his intention
 Who hides some subtler purpose Exile would free him
 For more stupendous mischief. Death! But how?
 There is this Syrian people, there is Timocles
 Whose light unstable mind like a pale leaf
 Trembles, desires, resolves, renounces."²⁷

Phayllus roughly estimates the character of Timocles whose mind is imbalanced by the overwhelmingly singular passion for Rodogune. Voluptuous volition has gripped Timocles out and out, and the spoliated effort of his solicitousness makes him a cat's paw in the hands of the crooked Phayllus. But he is not just a 'shapeless soul,/ Clay for each passing circumstance to alter', as Phayllus makes him out to be. Timocles immediately becomes overjoyous at the news that Antiochus is creeping in slyly to slay him silently after having been defeated in the violent battle. Diplomatically, Phayllus reminds him that history is strewn with such instances of the commonest rule of statesmanship. Mentally drowned and blinded by the sticky overflowings of his heart, Timocles' wit and intelligence are blurred by the scourge of his passion for Rodogune. He gives his power to Phayllus who advises him to put an end to the life of Antiochus

Phayllus acts swiftly in the hope that fortune will bear him out. The dramatist has lifted to its acme the hope of Phayllus thus far to rise near the throne, and goads him now on to his final stroke of dismissing Antiochus from the world by crooked means. It is very often seen that villains at some point of their life do depend on fortune. But the quirk of fortune is unintelligible to even the shrewdest of human creatures. Phayllus' hopes are dashed to the ground, just as Timocles' are. But just as there is a soul of goodness even in things evil, so Phayllus cannot but be wonderstruck by the royal element that embellishes the character of Antiochus. The death-scene of Antiochus is most marvellously drawn. Phayllus the manoeuverer is dwarfed in stature by the luminous character of Antiochus. Sri Aurobindo's artistic finesse in the play reaches its climax as Antiochus goes down 'for an immortal waking', while Phayllus grimly feels great in overthrowing him, realizing sardonically that death will also engulf him, that the thoughts of what mortals are, do and are done to will mortify him as well. Antiochus holds to scorn Phayllus' vain endeavour to move him in defeat. He debars Phayllus from becoming a god in evil who subjugates the souls of men. We are impressed by the thought that Antiochus will wake up immortally while the earth which is enveloped by darkness and meanness sleeps. The two extremes of character—Phayllus a rare study in malignity as Antiochus labels him, and Antiochus himself cleaving through the adamantine walls of mortality—are brought to the limelight by the poet-playwright whose vision could not rest merely with the waste of the good but is concerned also with the expulsion of evil. So it is quite in tune with poetic justice that Phayllus is punished at the end by Nicanor who holds the reins at long last. Phayllus' dreams do not fructify, Timocles' passion remains unquenched. Cleopatra is paid back in her own coin, as she says,

"I am punished, gods,
Who dared outlive my great unhappy husband
For this."²⁸

The lull dawns after the great storm. The tremendous sense of waste envelops the whole world. It is the silence of darkness, as Philoctetes ruefully says,

"Doomed still to live we for a while remain
Expecting what the gods have yet in store."²⁹

Even the catastrophe does not purge us of the doomed surrounding. The tragedy ends with a note of despair all around. The enveloping gloom deepens as we finish the play. There is no silver lining, no ray of hope peeping in through the bleak atmosphere of the tragedy.

Queen Cleopatra's decision to choose Timocles as the King complicates the

plot of the play. For, had Antiochus been chosen the King, his tragedy and Rodogune's might not have happened at all. All sorts of recriminations and sour feelings ensue between the two brothers out of this gambit of Queen Cleopatra.

As the two brothers drift apart from each other, two different passions drive them on to their fate—in Antiochus the passion of perilous heroism, in Timocles the infatuating passion of love and lust. The irresistible passion of ambition in Antiochus to rise to the throne is the fatal blemish in him, which is flared up by the deprivation of kingship meted out to him by the unjust decision of Queen Cleopatra. This is Antiochus' *hamartia*. But it is presented in a very natural manner, quite in tune with the heroic grandeur of Antiochus. But the complication in the plot ushered in by Cleopatra might not have fructified if Antiochus had not taken the fatal decision to join hands with his brother Timocles in order to thwart the Parthian king. This is the *peripeteia*, "sudden change of fortune", of the play, *Rodogune*. *Anagnorisis* or recognition of the blunder that Antiochus makes comes when Antiochus sees that he is entrapped by Phayllus. Of course, the element of *anagnorisis* ("recognition") affects the character of Timocles also. But it overlaps on the *denouement* or "resolution" of the play. The 'royal vast imaginations' of Antiochus are 'all spilt into a meagre stream of blood', while Timocles feels that he is for ever divided from him, only to live unfriended and solitary in the shade. Rodogune dies of grief, and darkness settles down in the 'storm-visited, bolt-shattered house'. But Sri Aurobindo is able to sublimate this domestic tragedy into a tragedy of the whole kingdom. *Catharsis*, "release of emotion", is complete.

In the course of the action of the play, the emphasis is given centrally on the exhibition of the clash and collision of the irreconcilable opposites, the sufferings of the inherently good characters at the hands of the vile, tricky and malign-to-the-core personalities. The good forces are to flounder against the evil forces which flummox them completely, but by virtue of their inherent goodness and nobility they win over them, maybe in defeat and even death. The tragedy is, as I have said at the beginning, as much of Rodogune as of Antiochus. But Rodogune is the axis round which the threads of interest revolve and are plaited. This axis is too weak to withstand the cunning of the world. Outwardly speaking, there is an enveloping darkness all around. But as in life there is yet a meaning in spite of its numberless deceits and failures, so in this poetic drama there is the ultimate triumph of good over bad, of eternal waking over the 'fathomless zero' of the world, so to say.

It has been said by Jean Paul Sartre in his book, *Being and Nothingness*, that a play 'releases subjectivity', that through the play man 'escapes his natural nature'.³⁰ In this release of subjectivity, in this escape of man's natural nature, poetry plays a vital role in *Rodogune*. It is replete with poetical qualities of high merit. Poetry is a convenient vehicle for exhibiting the panoramic vision of Sri Aurobindo the poet-playwright. Poetic drama, as Lascelles Abercrombie says in

his important essay, *The Function of Poetry in the Drama*, 'neglects the outer shells of reality, and directly seeks to imitate the core.'³¹ This innermost reality Abercrombie calls 'the spiritual reality' or 'the emotional reality'.³² In order to convey this reality the characters in a poetic play have 'an exaggerated shapeliness of personality' and 'this exaggeration of character-form draws on a corresponding exaggeration in the shape of the speech they utter.'³³ The characters in *Rodogune* have an exaggerated shapeliness—particularly Antiochus and Timocles. The speech they utter is inflated, no doubt. The poetic language in the play performs twofold functions; the lyrical dynamism of dramatic life is conveyed by means of the superb poetical raptures, while the actions of the *dramatis personae* find their adequate expressions in terms of metaphorical, image-bound poetry. *Rodogune* herself is a flower pure and simple, but short-lived, cut off untimely by the 'bronze Necessity' of grisly circumstances. The different planes of existence are adumbrated by Sri Aurobindo by bringing in images from the worlds of nature and animals. The perishability of the body is conveyed by constant harping on 'carrion'. And, on top of all, there is a focus on man's ignorance of inscrutable Fate, what the Future holds in store for the proud man confident of his actions. The eternal dichotomy between appearance and reality, the warp and woof of romance set off against the ghastly reality of the crooked ways of the world, are expressed in a language fraught with the power of poetry. Sri Aurobindo never makes us forget that light lurks beyond the veil of this phenomenal world. The tragic being is compelled to trudge along the thorny course of life but in that lies glory, in that the light of eternity dawns on him. It is this immense light which uplifts the whole being of man, however crippled and darkened by the ways of the world he might be. Poetry tries to induce this joy of life, this light of life in the deepest sense in us. It is, as Abercrombie has said beautifully, 'the alcohol to which the human organism answers with an intoxication of sense, mind, and emotion, bringing them into a unity of triumphant and delighted self-consciousness, bright enough to turn for awhile this obscure fate of life in which we are immersed into some clear nature lit through and through with ourselves, that is to say, with those desires which are most profoundly ourselves.'³⁴

So hope glimmers; the sense of waste which is the centre of tragic impression according to Bradley³⁵ is complete and meaningful here in Sri Aurobindo's *Rodogune*. 'Tragedy would not be tragedy, if it were not a painful mystery,'³⁶ says Bradley with reference to Shakespearean tragedy. This *painful mystery* has been evoked enormously in *Rodogune* also. Romantic in spirit, idealistic and symbolic in theme, fulminating with lyrical fervour and dreamy beauty, embellished by graceful mysticism and spiritual vision, *Rodogune* is a poetic play *par excellence*. Here the profundity of thought and feeling is graced by the fecundity of expression. The joy of life is rummaged out of the seamy side of things. The cathartic effect is complete. Hard it is to die, but harder still to live. But the joy

of life is never extinguished. That is the truth—the poetical truth conveyed in *Rodogune* by Sri Aurobindo.

(Concluded)

PRANABANANDA BANDOPADHYAY

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“SATYAVAN MUST DIE”

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

(Continued from the issue of March 1991)

11. The cause of Death

If the day of *amāvasyā* is loaded with weighty occult contents of a dark possibility, then summer and noon too must have their complementary share in providing a sure physical cause for the death of Satyavan. In the reckoning of a high secret cosmic process this death may be a necessity; it may be as if some supreme will, having decided to achieve something in this death-tormented world, has devised it as a handle, a good means, to accomplish that purpose leading to luminous immortality here. But for it to happen, to materialise, and for death to take place, there has to be a plausible or natural ground in the terrestrial sequence; there has to be an effectuating mechanism towards this end. Occultly, the “great Woodsman” has already hewed at Satyavan and snapped his life’s cord. Now, physico-vitally, the breath has to cease due to some reason. Thus, while preordained fate is the final cause of the death of Satyavan, we must have an efficient or physical cause for it to occur. It could be the fall of the doomed from the tree, or his getting inadvertently hit by the axe, or snake-bite, or else sunstroke. We must discover the medical basis of this death. From the text it is at once obvious that there was no fall from a tree leading to death; nor was it due to getting hit accidentally by the axe which Satyavan was using for cutting the tree-branches, though later it became an “instrument of pain” for him. The possibility is either snake-bite or sunstroke; most probably it is the latter.

Let us consider snake-bite. Only four types of the common snakes of India are dangerously venomous: the cobra and the krait leading to failure of the respiratory system and Russell’s Viper and the saw-scaled Viper bringing about failure of the nervous system. The first two belong to the neurotoxic family and the second pair to the vasculotoxic. In any case, none of the snake-bites is a medical emergency. Symptoms will not show until between half an hour and three hours after the wound is inflicted. P. J. Deoras in his book *Snakes of India* writes that in a cobra-bite the bitten spot develops a small reddish weal. Then, 25 minutes later, constitutional symptoms start appearing and the patient begins to feel sleepy, slightly intoxicated and weak in the legs. During the next 25 minutes there is a profuse salivation and vomiting accompanied by severe abdominal pain. After 2 hours the paralysis is complete, respiration stops and the victim succumbs to the bite. In the case of Russell’s Viper and the saw-scaled Viper severe pain develops within 8 minutes at the bitten spot; the wound is red and

extremely painful. 15 minutes afterwards there is an intense swelling at the wound. Excruciating pain, thready pulse, cold sweat and vomiting are followed by dilation of the pupils. 2 hours later the patient suffers marked collapse, loss of consciousness, extensive suppuration and sloughing which is followed by malignant edema. There is no paralysis; but severe haemorrhage from the rectum and other orifices leads to the victim's death.

Let us now briefly see the medical background of the sunstroke. The books record that it produces a sudden and severe headache with signs of meningeal irritation, hyperpyrexia and increasing coma. The spinal fluid shows increased pressure and a polymorph pleocytosis; it is sterile on culture. With the suddenness of onset the pulse becomes feeble and there is loss of consciousness, rapidly causing failure of heart and respiration. Meningeal irritation is followed by an intense occipito-cervical headache. There are bouts of restlessness, with a monotonous, rather high-pitched wailing cry.

In the light of these descriptions let us go through the details as given by the poet in connection with the death of Satyavan. The young couple "with linked hands" is moving through the forest, admiring and wondering at the beauty of nature in its calm solemn grandeur. Satyavan speaks lovingly to Savitri but she is, inwardly, tormented by the thought of the approaching death. He, however, means to finish the assigned task quickly and therefore wields the axe in haste of joy because of his beloved being there with him. In the process, and while singing a "sage's chant", his doom comes upon him. He is a prey to the bites of fierce agents of death:

The violent and hungry hounds of pain
Travelled through his body biting as they passed
Silently, and all his suffering breath besieged
Strove to rend life's strong heart-cords and be free.¹

In spite of this extreme pain Satyavan, after a moment's "rich relief", gets up and resumes his work; but, in the meanwhile the "great Woodsman" has done his work. Satyavan expresses in a woe-begone voice his suffering to his beloved:

". . . Savitri, a pang
Cleaves through my head and breast as if the axe
Were piercing it and not the living branch.
Such agony rends me as the tree must feel
When it is sundered and must lose its life."²

Then Savitri, with Satyavan's head in her lap, notices a death-change taking place in him:

... his sweet familiar hue was changed
 Into a tarnished greyness and his eyes
 Dimmed over, forsaken of the clear light she loved.³

At that moment when he is about to breathe his last, he solicits Savitri to lean down and kiss him as though to seal his soul back into his body.

Clearly, two attacks are indicated in this description, ruling out an accident as well as a snake-bite which does not pass “silently”. The cause lies in the summer heat acting upon over-work.

Vyasa speaks of Satyavan’s hard labour in chopping the fire-wood and his suffering a severe headache. “There is a cleaving headache,” tells Satyavan to Savitri, “that has come to me due to this hard work. My limbs are in agony and there is a burning sensation in my heart. It appears to me as though sharp spears are being driven through my head.” Finally, realising that he has no strength to remain standing, he expresses to his wife his wish to lie down on the ground.

तस्य पाटयत काष्ठं स्वेदो वै समजायत ।
 व्यायामेन च तेनास्य जज्ञे शिरसि वेदना ॥
 सोऽभिगम्य प्रिया भार्यामुवाच श्रमपीडितः ।
 “व्यायामेन ममानेन जाता शिरसि वेदना ॥
 अङ्गानि चैव सावित्रि हृदयं दूयतीव च ।
 अस्वस्थमिव चात्मानं लक्षये मितभाषिणि ॥
 शूलैरिव शिरो विद्धमिदं संलक्षयाम्यहम् ।
 तत् स्वप्तुमिच्छे कल्याणि न स्यातुं शक्तिरस्ति मे ॥”

Savitri immediately goes closer to her husband and sits on the ground and takes his head in her lap. She knows that the time for death has arrived.

Exhaustion owing to over-work, particularly the hurry with which he wanted to finish the task, prompted by the intention of giving a larger part of the day to his beloved, seems then to be the immediate or efficient cause of his collapse. Add to this the summer-heat at noon of which, understandably, he was quite unmindful in the joy of love. Not, therefore, snake-bite or some similar mishap but rather sunstroke in this given state of physical fatigue must have been the prime or the determining factor in the death of Satyavan. To put it more poetically: If Yama is the son of the Sun-God Vivasvan, then surely Satyavan’s getting hit by a sunstroke is rather significant, even appealing to such a sense. Even as there is a translation of one dimension into another, we have here perceptibly the occult turning into the physical; Fate has found the needed means. Hence, if at all we have to assign a clinical cause for the death of Satyavan, it must be linked up with the summer noon and his over-exertion. From the nature of symptoms described in the texts, we may well surmise that the death was due to a sunstroke which can be a “fairly violent thing”.

About this “fairly violent thing” there is an interesting description given by the Mother. A sunstroke can be fatal but she also recounts how, by calling a higher spiritual Force, the disorder can be completely cured. “This upsets you considerably, it is one of the things which make you most ill—a sunstroke upsets everything, it disturbs the inner functions, it generally causes a congestion in the head and very high fever. So, if it has happened... if you can just go into a quiet place, stretch yourself out flat, go out of your body... remain above in a way to be able to see the body... and from there, consciously, you pull the Force from above, and if you are used to doing it, if your aspiration is strong enough, you get the answer...”⁴ The Mother advises to do the whole thing very slowly and quietly, concentrating the Force until the body starts receiving it from above. Once the Force has entered into the body the person can get back and be considered to be fully cured

If it is a sunstroke and if we have to attribute the revival of Satyavan to the Force entering into his body, then that Force must have been brought down by Savitri. She had taken him to a calm and quiet place, made him lie down on the ground and invoked the superior Power to cure him of the disorder. He had surrendered himself to his fate and had accepted death. However, recovery from a sunstroke—for that matter from any fatal attack—is, as can be inferred from the Mother’s description, possible only if death has not yet occurred; revival, once the life-cord is snapped, is ordinarily out of the question

Therefore, a Charvak might as well argue: “In the case of Satyavan there was actually no death at all; it was only a state of deep coma and loss of consciousness. Perhaps there was no failure of the heart and respiration. Savitri was quick in recognising the gravity of the situation and took prompt steps in providing first-aid to the afflicted. She took him under the shade of a ‘kingly trunk’ and resuscitated him by the process of mouth-to-mouth breathing. Did not Satyavan cry to Savitri ‘Lean down, my soul, and kiss me while I die’? Yes, when she responded, she was actually helping her dearest to recover his breath. She was fortunate to be under the cool shade of a ‘kingly trunk’. Traditionally the tree is supposed to be a full-grown banyan tree which not only provides a thick luxurious shade but also gives something more richly soothing than that. On an average a large-size tree of this kind takes about 400 litres of water every day from the soil and supplies it to its thousand branches and its verdant palm-sized leaves. During the day, particularly at noon, when the rate of evaporation from the leaves is very high, there is produced a fine air-conditioning effect underneath it. Hence not only just the dry shade but also the humid cool air must have contributed greatly to the revival of the ‘dead’. For the patient affected with a sunstroke this certainly is nature’s redeeming boon. It is not therefore necessary to think that there were supernatural factors involved in the death and resurrection of Satyavan.”

This Charvakian argument cannot sustain itself in the event of an actual

death which is what the texts tell us to have happened in the case of Satyavan. A “luminous Satyavan” cannot arise out of the body unless the death is complete. While thus a physical process is sought for the death to occur, that by itself cannot become the fact of death; mixing up of the occult and the gross is the fallacy in this approach. Predestination used a sunstroke to accomplish its purpose. Consistency in descriptions of the summer and the noon provides a good support for this hypothesis.

(To be continued)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

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SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of March 1991)

BETWEEN 1887 and 1889 Sri Aurobindo and his brother Benoybhusan stayed at 128 Cromwell Road, London, then the headquarters of the South Kensington Liberal Club, through the generosity of the Club's Secretary Mr. James Cotton. He was the brother of Sir Henry James Cotton who was a friend of Dr. Krishna Dhan Ghose. Benoybhusan was doing some clerical work for the club for 5 shillings a week and Cotton took him as his assistant. He took interest in all the three brothers. Benoybhusan was very generous by temperament.

Due to irregular remittances of Dr. K. D. Ghose Sri Aurobindo with his two brothers had to face a food crisis and the room which was provided by James Cotton for their shelter was unheated and not fit to be used as a living room. They could not afford to have a fire in it. Manmohan could not endure the pressure of hardship at Cromwell Road. So he left when he found a suitable place. His position also improved as he won a scholarship to go to Christ Church College, Oxford, in 1887

An amusing account of the room in Cromwell Road occurs in one of Manmohan's letters. He wrote: "I write to you to tell you my new address to which we have just moved from St. Stephen's Avenue. I will show it to you some day: it is very different from the old place—but I dare say my brothers will get accustomed to it in time. Of course I (probably) will be going to Oxford in a month's time. There is a confounded railway behind—but as the trains go more gently than I have a right to expect, I can put up with that. There is here a reading room, a library (in embryo), a smoking-room, a club-room where the members meet and lectures are held and I don't know what not.... This place, you must remember, is off the Gloucester Road which is of course opposite the Broad Walk in Kensington Gardens."¹

In the year 1889 Sri Aurobindo moved to a private lodging at 28, Kempsfords Gardens, Earl's Court, South Kensington.² He stayed there till he went to Cambridge. "In a letter of 1890, Manmohan describes this house: 'Kempsfords Gardens I must tell you, looks out upon Brompton Cemetery and funerals pass down it every day'.³

Both at Manchester and at St. Paul's School Sri Aurobindo plunged into literary activities and the study of classics. He did splendidly in his studies and won many prizes. He got as a prize an illustrated edition of the *Arabian Nights* which he selected himself. His literary activities continued when he came to Cambridge.

Between the ages of sixteen and eighteen he began to write more poetry. At that time, his brother Manmohan had already earned a reputation as an English poet. He was a classmate and a friend of Laurence Binyon who later became a

well-known literary figure, and with Stephen Philips, who was also a promising poet. Apart from proficiency in Classical study, Sri Aurobindo had a poetical bent of mind. Besides, Manmohan's influence stimulated him to write poetry. At the age of seventeen he translated a Greek passage entitled "Hecuba". Laurence Binyon happened to read it and so pleased he was that he encouraged him to write more poetry. During the holidays the three brothers used to go out of London whenever they could afford it.

Sri Aurobindo passed the Matriculation examination in December 1889. Towards the last part of his career at St. Paul's School he won an Open Scholarship for the study of the classics in King's College, Cambridge. From a letter of Donald Loukes, Assistant Librarian King's College, Cambridge, to the Ashram's Archives, dated 1 October 1975, we learn:

"Sri Aurobindo took the examination for Scholarships, Exhibitions and Admissions in December 1889. When he came here in 1890, he read for the Classical Tripos, so that I think that he will have taken the Classical papers in the entrance examination. There were five Classical papers. 1. Translation from English verse and prose into Latin verse and prose. 2. Translation from English verse and prose into Greek verse and prose. 3. Translation from Latin verse and prose into English. 4. Translations from Greek verse and prose into English. 5. Questions on classical grammar and history. As Sri Aurobindo came from St. Paul's School, he was eligible for the open Scholarship."⁴

"Scholarship was awarded at King's College as the result of examinations which are held at the College. Candidates are not accepted unless they have a good School academic record in examination. I think the figure £80 can be taken as correct."⁵ So £80 was the value of the Senior Scholarship which he won.

During the last year at St. Paul's School Sri Aurobindo was a member of the I.C.S. Class. "The I.C.S. Class was a group of senior boys who were working for the I.C.S. entrance examination. This class was organised by the School and had no official recognition from the I.C.S. There were five such boys at St. Paul's in Ghose's last year of whom he appears to have been the only Indian. He stood second in the class, and passed 11th—out of all candidates—into the I.C.S."⁶

The scholarship which carried £80 was not enough for maintenance since Sri Aurobindo maintained not only himself but his brothers as well. He also got an allowance known as I.C.S. probationer stipend worth £150. Even so he was hard pressed. Without the help of a tutor he took up simultaneously the study of the Classics and the preparation for the competitive I.C.S. examination. This must have proved a strain on his probationship. From his probationer scholarship he could not afford to engage a tutor. Prothero in a letter to James Cotton writes about Sri Aurobindo's studies:

"He performed his part of the bargain, as regards the college most honourably, and took a high place in the 1st class of the Classical Tripos at the end of the second year of his residence. He also obtained certain college prizes,

showing command of English and literary ability. That a man should have been able to do this (which alone is quite enough for most undergraduates), and at the same time to keep up his I.C.S. work, proves very unusual industry and capacity. Besides his classical scholarship he possessed a knowledge of English literature far beyond the average of undergraduates and wrote a much better English style than most young Englishmen.

“Moreover, the man has not only ability but character. He has had a very hard and anxious time of it for the last two years... Yet his courage and perseverance have never failed. I have several times written to his father on his behalf, but for the most part unsuccessfully. It is only lately that I managed to extract from him enough to pay some tradesmen who would otherwise have put his son into the County Court. I am quite sure that these pecuniary difficulties were not due to any extravagance on Ghose’s part”⁷⁷

Dr Ghose wrote an angry letter after sending the money to Sri Aurobindo chiding him for his extravagance! While relating this, Sri Aurobindo made a humorous statement: “There was no money to be extravagant with!”⁷⁸

In spite of the lack in parental duty, it is surprising that neither Manmohan nor Sri Aurobindo seems to have had any bitterness towards their father. On the contrary, every time they wrote or spoke of him it was with great admiration and pride.

James S. Cotton wrote a letter to Sir Arthur Macpherson: “It happens that I have known Mr. A. A. Ghose and his two brothers for the past five years, and that I have been a witness of the pitiable straits to which they have all three been reduced through the failure of their father, a Civil Surgeon in Bengal and (I believe) a most respectable man, to supply them with adequate resources. In addition, they have lived an isolated life, without any Englishman to take care of them or advise them.”⁷⁹

A letter from Manmohan dated July 28 [probably 1887] from 49, St. Stephen’s Avenue recounts a story of Dr. Ghose which is worth quoting. The reference is to a piece of news in the *Daily News* of London. The letter is addressed to Laurence Binyon: “As for the piece in the *Daily News* about me, it was stuck in simply because it is a radical paper. We have no family relation to Lalmohan Ghose whatever, but his brother who bears the same name as myself is a great friend of my father’s. All the Ghoses came originally from the Punjab on the Afghan border. The word means ‘fame’, and they were a tribe of the proud warrior caste. But our family has sadly come down; the family house or palace, a very noble building, I believe, not far from Calcutta, is quite in ruins. My father, when a boy, was very poor, living almost entirely by the charity of friends; and it is only thro’ his almost superhuman perseverance that we have to some degree retrieved ourselves—You may be sure I shall try all I can to get to Oxford. But I am in a rather strange position. My father wants me to go out to India and slave as a barrister, and become a man of the world like himself—a

thing which is quite distasteful to my nature. He is just now in difficulties and if he finds he cannot help me at University he may consent to my staying in England, and trying for some Civil Service appointment (like those in the British Museum), just to earn some money.... He is almost sure to want me to try the University.”¹⁰

Sri Aurobindo left St. Paul’s School in October 1890 to join King’s College, Cambridge, when he had completed his eighteenth year and two months

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

The Media Lab

There is a wide gap between spiritual and “electronic” aspirations for a better future. In the best case, there would be a constructive collaboration of both sides. But the following book-review shows that we are still far from that collaboration on the top level of electronic engineering: many advanced scientists are busy with projects which are rather exotic, irrelevant and often even dangerous for the further development of human beings.

STEWART Brand is a writer whose originality is underlined by the fact that he lives on a tug-boat in San Francisco Bay. He has founded and published the *Whole Earth Catalog*, for which he received the American National Book Award in 1972. He is also deeply involved with computer and media research. *The Media Lab—Inventing the Future at M.I.T.** gives insight into one of the most advanced Departments of the famous Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Brand had the privilege of getting direct access to the *Media Lab* with the specific purpose of writing about it and telling outsiders in more or less clear language what the students and exceptional scientists there are busy inventing.

In this present age man is predominantly *homo electronicus*, surrounding himself with ever new and ever more sophisticated gadgets. His world is becoming the “Global Village” (Marshall McLuhan) where news, data and dollars are racing around the earth with dizzying speed. Everything is getting interconnected, satellites reach the remotest village in the remotest country and carry pictures from the rest of the world into huts, houses, palaces and offices. The most spectacular progress is—at present—in the field of computers. Equipped with adequate programs (“software”), the hardware is today able to achieve astonishing feats of artificial intelligence. The best chess computers are already on the level of grandmasters, robots build cars or (to quote a rare performance) sit at a piano and play Mozart, with their camera’s eye focussing on the notes (I have seen that myself). Music synthesizers can imitate whole orchestras with such perfection that a layman cannot tell the difference when a piece is played on the radio (I have heard a demonstration of that kind in a BBC broadcast).

For scientists at the *Media Lab*, inventing the future means developing technologies which *they* consider revolutionary, such as interactive television. Instead of being the passive victim of whatever you are watching, you get a

* New York, Penguin Books 1988, pp 285, \$ 12

chance of intervening. Thus, if in a movie an actor appears whom you don't like, you touch the screen and make the pictures shrink to postcard size, even while you watch another program. Reading the electronic newspaper on the screen, touching a specific word on the screen—the name of a country, city, a sportsman or whatever—you get immediate access to the whole background, like an instant encyclopaedia, constantly actualized.

Powerful and immensely expensive video editing machines enable journalists to change tv or newspaper images imperceptibly. The sour face of a politician may be transformed into a smile, a beautiful sportswoman may appear without her aquiline nose. To some extent these techniques are already used by picture editors so that today images are no more a reliable source of information.

The connection Machine, a supercomputer operating with 65,536 processors at a time, works with a new, incredibly efficient parallel system. These computers have the capacity of developing new systems on their own which at the end nobody understands any more. It is a frightful prospect, if you consider it, but you can't stop it any more. As Brand says in a kind of aphorism in the first chapter, "Once a new technology rolls over you, if you're not part of the steamroller, you're part of the road." This also applies to the current situation in commerce and industry where quick and efficient communication as well as availability of data becomes more and more important for staying competitive. Computers have entered every field of life, such as banking, travelling, sports, publishing, astrology and translating. Once a certain speed and efficiency is established as standard, everyone strives to reach or surpass it in order to stay in business. Therefore, the ubiquitous presence of computer screens.

Reading Brand's book means entering the world of electronic tomorrow. It is fascinating and disturbing, dazzling and confusing. Just take the example of Nicholas Negroponete, the director of the Institute. He told Brand that he was not in the habit of reading newspapers, since his wife tells him in the morning whatever is important. She knows his mind so well that she can tell easily what news he wants to know. Now Negroponete thought a computer should be able to acquire that capacity as well. No doubt, his researchers and programmers will develop the required software, but to what good? The computer will always know the yesterday-Negroponete and his interests, by monitoring and remembering what items of the electronic newspaper on the screen he reads. After some time—this would be Negroponete's expectation—he will only be presented a perfect selection of really interesting articles. Any new opening—through a psychic spark, for instance—would be suppressed. Even while his wife could inwardly react and say, "I know, you are not interested in this item, but today there is a lecture by an Indian yogi in New York...", the computer would be dull, relegating the news to the distant background. The machine, his slave, becomes master of his destiny.

Another researcher in the Lab has a different kind of problem: "I would like

to get up in the morning, walk by my personal computer and say, 'Is there any electronic mail?' Then as I'm brushing my teeth, it says, 'Yes, you have three messages, and one was from Jerry Wiesner.' In neither case am I required to sit down and focus. I can do it in parallel. Doing things in parallel is what humans do naturally."—Just consider the use of the term "natural" in this context.

Inevitably and apparently irreversibly, the media—tv in particular—are creating new facts of life. The international media expert Peter Schwartz told Brand in an interview, "We've spent a lot of time talking about the role of information and computing in education, but by far the dominant curriculum in education today does not take place 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., it's 4 p.m. to midnight, when the kids watch television at home. Actually the teaching time at school is probably only about four hours. They've got seven hours later on of much higher quality (in the sense of access to communications), much more potent information, which completely overwhelms anything they get in the classroom." In this context, Schwartz does not say anything about the growing illiteracy in the States, the devastating side effects of watching tv for eight hours a day, witnessing hundreds and thousands of killings and acts of violence. Many American industrial companies have to teach employees basic skills in mathematics. For the computer kids it is easier taking apart and reassembling the electronic machine than solving a mathematical equation.

Stewart Brand has gone very deep into this subject of the MIT Media Lab as well as the "worldwide media laboratory in which we are all likely to be experimenters for the rest of our lives" (Preface). But he is more than a mere reporter of facts, he has his own philosophy and thinking. Thus, at the end of the last chapter he warns that if communications growth goes too fast, "it could generate massive resistance or crash by misadventure (...) Ecologists of communication, I imagine, would warn against having all one's eggs in one basket. We can be grateful for the vast dispersed populations of peasant and tribal cultures in the world who have never used a telephone or a TV, who walk where they're going, who live by local subsistence skills honed over millennia. You need to go on foot in Africa, Asia, South America to realize how many of these people there are and how sound they are. If the world city goes smash, they'll pick up the pieces, as they've done before. Whatever happens, they are a reminder that electronic communication may be essential to one kind of living, but it is superfluous to another."

Obviously, Brand has a gift which many of America's leading researchers at the MIT Media Lab are missing: Integral Vision.

IMPRESSIONS OF A 15-YEAR OLD SCHOOLBOY FROM THE SRI AUROBINDO MEMORIAL SCHOOL, BANGALORE

A LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL MISS ADITI VASISHTHA

Dear Aunty.

I am writing my impressions of the trip to Pondy on the paper I bought at the Ashram Paper Factory.

Just as all of us had finished making our purchases there, one of the older ladies asked me "Where do you come from?" I told her, "Bangalore", and she said, "Do you know Raj?" I said we were from Raj Uncle's School and she was very happy to know that. She said Raj Uncle had been living in Pondy for a very long time and she knew him well. She asked, "Who is his little sister? Her name's just slipped from my memory." I said, "Aditi aunty?" She said, "Ah yes! she was brought up here from when she was this small" (she indicated her hand and bent it close to her knee).

My first impression of Pondy left me feeling, 'Oh! this is just another typical Indian city; dirt, dust, crowd and noise.' But appearances are deceptive and I sure changed my opinion about the place very rapidly.

Pondy is a beautiful town. Walking down its Rues and admiring its Villas and Cercles is a lovely feeling. It has a distinct, informal French flair about it with its quaint houses, cafés and restaurants and its HALT AND PROCEED boards in French. The city makes one feel it like a fresh smelling flower.

I was totally unprepared to meet the awesome hugeness of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. I expected it to be an institution closed, unworldly and 'for the high thinkers only'. I had misconceived its size and the discovery of my *faux pas* came as a pleasant surprise.

There is an Ashram Department in every street, sprinkled throughout the length and breadth of the town, blending the hustle and bustle of daily life with the sanctity, holiness and clear, pure spirit and peaceful atmosphere of the Ashram, for its citizens to enjoy the best of both the worlds.

The highly organized, perfectly managed and maintained spotless cleanliness and comforts of the Ashram left us all gaping, astonished by its magnificence.

The best part of the whole trip was the feeling one experiences at the Mahasamadhi.

On the first day we went there at about 10 p.m., I touched my forehead to the dear marble and closed my eyes. All of a sudden, I felt a strange sensation within me. The harder I concentrated, the greater it grew. My mind was calm and entirely peaceful and no other thoughts bothered me. I felt I was touching

the hearts of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. I suddenly remembered the prayer you had taught us, 'Sweet Mother' and whispered it softly.

The peace of mind, the fresh feeling of having begun things anew, the atmosphere of the place and the wonderful sensation to know you are being touched by someone, watched and cared for by someone and guided by someone is all too great to put on this piece of paper.

Our visit to Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's rooms was another sort of experience. I could almost see them sitting, moving about and blessing their devotees. The atmosphere is heavily saturated with their holy presence.

Just before we slept, we used to go for a stroll on the promenade every day. Sitting on the parapet beside the thundering ocean made us feel how small, puny, helpless man is in comparison to the voluminous force that drives the universe, which makes the immense mighty ocean, the huge sky and the pleasant land.

Lots and lots of love.

Your loving pupil

N. G. R. PRASAD
XB CLASS

“THE COUPLE OF SLIPS”

IN Shraddhavan’s excellent review, published in the February *Mother India*, of Nirodbaran’s latest publication *Sri Aurobindo for All Ages: A Biography* occurs the sentence: “...the overall grasp, clarity and accuracy of the presentation far outweigh the couple of slips in the earlier part of the book which have been pointed out to me by a discerning friend who agrees with my general admiration.” Nirodbaran has expressed the wish that his readers as well as himself should be apprised of these “slips”. Hence the following explanation.

On p. 16 Nirodbaran, writing about Sri Aurobindo’s “two years at Cambridge”, records: “Sri Aurobindo also experimented with translations of passages from Greek and Latin poetry. Later he told us of a significant incident in this connection. Once a classmate of his, Norman Ferrers, was reading a line from Homer which he thought was one of the poet’s finest lines and, as Sri Aurobindo listened, his ear caught the true rhythm of quantitative metre. As you may appreciate, English is an accented language whereas the sound-structure of Greek and Latin, like Sanskrit, is based on quantity i e., the length of a syllable, so that it is extremely difficult to bring the swing of the quantitative metre into English poetry successfully and it had eluded Matthew Arnold and other English poets of the past who had experimented with it. In later years Sri Aurobindo wrote some magnificent poems in quantitative metre.”

As Nirodbaran implies, what Sri Aurobindo has said in one of his talks is that Ferrers gave him the key to a true quantitative hexameter in English. Like every scholar in Greek, Sri Aurobindo must have known very well how the rhythm of the Homeric hexameter ran. The problem, as again Nirodbaran makes us understand, was to combine the unavoidable accentual character of the English language with a definite use of quantity. Quantity, according to Sri Aurobindo, plays a part in English poetry for subtle artistic effects in expressing mood or meaning, yet it has had so far no open role in metrical structure. So Ferrers had to read some line in English with accent and quantity so combined that the sense of the possibility of a true quantitative hexameter in this language might dawn on Sri Aurobindo. Making Ferrers read Greek instead was Nirodbaran’s slip

In his long essay “On Quantitative Metre” Sri Aurobindo remarks: “Two poets, Clough and Longfellow, have ventured on a considerable attempt in this kind and have succeeded in creating something like an English hexameter; but this was only a half accomplishment.”¹ Almost certainly it was a line from Clough that Ferrers read out, for while discussing this poet Sri Aurobindo, after praising three lines for their “true hexameter rhythm”, picks out a line as *par excellence*: “At another place he rises still higher and suddenly discovers, though

¹ *Collected Poems* (Birth Centenary Ed), pp 345-46

only once in a way and apparently without being conscious of his find, the rhythm of the true quantitative hexameter—

Hē like ā | gōd cāme | lēavīng hīs | āmplē Ō|lym̄piān| chāmbēr

where the opening antibacchius and spondee followed by bounding and undulating dactyls give a sound-value recognisable as akin to the ancient movement. It would be an epic line if it were not in the mock-heroic style; but, even so, if we met it apart from its context, it would remind us at once of the Homeric rhythms—

Bē de kat Oulumpoio karēnōn chōomenos kēr....”¹

This line from the *Iliad* Sri Aurobindo has translated:

Down from the peaks of Olympus he came, wrath vexing his heart-strings.

The second slip to which Shradhdhan refers is on p. 28. It is apropos of the papers and manuscripts of Sri Aurobindo which were seized when he was arrested in connection with the Alipore Bomb Case. They included much literary work done in Baroda. After India's Independence a good many were recovered from a steel cupboard in the Judges' Retiring Room. Among those lost, Nirodbaran mentions with special regret a translation of Kalidasa's *Meghaduta* (*The Cloud-Messenger*) in English *terza rima*s. For Sri Aurobindo is reported to have said: "It is a pity that the translation cannot be found, for it was well done." There is a misconception here. Actually the MS of *The Cloud-Messenger* was entrusted for safety's sake to a politician friend, Monsieur David, in Pondicherry as a precaution against the likely tricks of the British C.I.D. men who were always anxious to search Sri Aurobindo's house. Years later, when the MS was sought to be recovered, its caretaker who had tucked it away at the bottom of a trunk found to his dismay that white ants had completely eaten it up!

Nirodbaran admits having known this fact. He wonders how an oversight crept into his book.

“A DISCERNING FRIEND”

¹ *Ibid*, p. 381

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

27th Annual Conference

12 August 1990

Speech by Mahashweta Parhi

SCIENCE, SPIRITUALITY AND INTEGRAL YOGA

THE modern age is at a crucial stage in the ascending scale of human evolution. We are now confronted with two seemingly contradictory issues that can no longer be faced with indifference or neglect. We are compelled to make a choice between the two because of their immense bearing in solving the present crisis and in shaping a better tomorrow. On the one hand we have the pursuit of materialistic science, and on the other the religious quest culminating in spiritual realisation.

Of course, this is not the first period in human history when these two all-important preoccupations of man have come face to face in open enmity. In Europe, during the mediaeval age, the orthodox church was vehemently against scientific thought and discovery, and persecuted many Gallileos for posing what seemed to it a threat against Christianity. As if God were afraid of rational thought and his very existence were threatened by Science! As Sri Aurobindo says: "The war between religion and science has been almost the leading phenomenon of European culture. Even philosophy and science have been unable to agree; they too have quarrelled and separated. These powers still coexist in Europe, but they are not a happy family; civil war is their natural atmosphere."¹ But in Ancient India, knowledge, be it scientific or philosophic, went hand in hand with religion. As Sri Aurobindo observes, "it was a way of thinking and knowing in which there is a harmony, a consensus, a union between philosophy and religion and a systematised well-tested psychological experience."² This seems to be the reason why Hinduism is still alive and flourishing in India.

But now, although we are at the very apex of a rapidly progressive scientific age, there are a growing number of persons who are dissatisfied with it and, seeing the inherent shortcomings of reason and science, are searching for something truer and more perfect on which to found life. Spirituality, an age-old pursuit, becomes therefore of immense importance if it can serve this purpose.

¹ *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (Cent Ed, Vol 14), pp 60-61

² *Ibid*

But at this stage, how does one reconcile these two warring pursuits? Because the catholic thinker sees a truth in both the views, he cannot wholly disregard one and exclusively adopt the other. Nevertheless, these views as they are do not seem to permit coexistence. Science accepts Matter to be the sole reality and passes off Spirit as a subjective and therefore unreliable experience of dreamers. Spirituality, of the ascetic type, on the other hand, represented in India by Shankara's illusionism, accepts Spirit as the one reality and denies Matter as only Maya.

I shall read out to you here two sonnets of Sri Aurobindo that illustrate the fundamental absurdity in the scientists' trying to explain Spirit in terms of Matter or in the claim of ascetics to discredit Matter.

First, I read the sonnet on the scientist's materialism:

A DREAM OF SURREAL SCIENCE

One dreamed and saw a gland write Hamlet, drink
 At the Mermaid, capture immortality;
 A committee of hormones on the Aegean's brink
 Composed the Iliad and the Odyssey.

A thyroid, meditating almost nude
 Under the Bo-tree, saw the eternal Light
 And, rising from its mighty solitude,
 Spoke of the Wheel and the eightfold path all right.

A brain by a disordered stomach driven
 Thundered through Europe, conquered, ruled and fell,
 From St. Helena went, perhaps, to Heaven.
 Thus wagged on the surreal world, until

A scientist played with atoms and blew out
 The universe before God had time to shout.¹

And now, I read the other sonnet about the Mayavadin's illusionism.

SELF

He said, "I am egoless, spiritual, free,"
 Then swore because his dinner was not ready.
 I asked him why. He said, "It is not me,
 But the belly's hungry god who gets unsteady."

¹ *Collected Poems* (Cent Ed, Vol 5), p 145

I asked him why. He said, "It is his play.
 I am unmoved within, desireless, pure.
 I care not what may happen day by day."
 I questioned him, "Are you so very sure?"

He answered, "I can understand your doubt.
 But to be free is all. It does not matter
 How you may kick and howl and rage and shout,
 Making a row over your daily platter.

"To be aware of self is liberty.
 Self I have got and, having self, am free."¹

The poignant question at this juncture is whether these two pursuits are at all really contradictory and not complementary. If they are contradictory in their essential truths they can never be reconciled. This conclusion leads to very serious implications regarding the aim of human life. For if the scientific view is true, that the material universe is indeed self-existent and does not need God, then there is no hope for any higher evolution for man and no possibility of a perfect life on earth. But terrestrial history has proved this to be always false. For evolution proceeding from Matter to Life and from Life to Mind is now moving towards some faculty not yet known, yet greater by far than our present mind, and thus the inevitability of a glorious future for man cannot be treated as an unsubstantial dream or a chimera. In the same way, the ascetic solution which considers Spirit as aloof from life and life as mere Maya is also inconclusive because the Spirit is the source and creator of the world and, though now involved in Matter, is bound to fully emerge in the course of evolution and manifest the divine life upon earth.

According to Sri Aurobindo, neither one view nor the other is entirely true and therefore they seem contradictory. But he affirms that their reconciliation is possible if we admit that essentially both Spirit and Matter are the two aspects of the same Reality, which in *The Life Divine* he calls "The Omnipresent Reality".

Asceticism's denial of life has a great attraction for the bound soul of man, and is in a sense even more radically effective than that of the materialism's denial of the Spirit. For centuries innumerable ascetics in all countries have pursued this path of negating life and even a line of spiritual experience collaborates with their conviction of the futility of life. The experience of the pure and silent Self is so overwhelming, convincing and concrete and carries with it such a sense of finality, and since in this experience life seems only an illusion, that it is difficult to see the limitation of this experience. But however convincing

¹ *Ibid*, p 151

initially, if we pursue the experience further, we arrive at a greater experience in which the dynamic aspect of the Spirit reveals itself and in that integral experience life loses its illusionary character and becomes itself a manifestation of the Spirit.

On the other side, science and reason in their own way are sincerely seeking for the truth. But their methods are inappropriate and their instruments are as yet inapt for finding the deeper truths of existence. Our eyes can see only the seven colours of the spectrum, but science has proved that light contains other colours too, like ultra-violet and infra-red. So too the presence of sounds inaudible to the human ear can be detected by very precise and finely-tuned instruments. Can we not then say that perhaps science itself does not yet possess subtler supra-physical instruments which can detect the hidden presence of the Spirit? What is now encouraging is that even the scientists have begun to doubt if there is not some deeper reality than that of Matter. Some of them now maintain that Matter is a form of energy and energy a form of consciousness. Psychologists speak of a consciousness beyond mind.

And this, in fact, is the right direction that science is taking. At last it will face and accept its own shortcomings and prepare the way for a greater spiritual advent. In this way it will be also fulfilling itself. So far science has been able to grasp only the processes or the "how" of material phenomena; with the help of the suprarational consciousness it will have an insight into the cause or the "why" of this mind-boggling universe.

When this happens, the apparent contradiction between Matter and Spirit will be removed and in their reconciliation the integral view of existence propounded by Sri Aurobindo will become evident.

I end my speech with a brief statement by Sri Aurobindo about his integral view which bridges the great gulf between Matter and Spirit:

"The two are one: Spirit is the soul and reality of that which we sense as Matter; Matter is a form and body of that which we realise as the Spirit."¹

¹ *The Life Divine* (Cent Ed , Vol 18), p 241