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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 28 APRIL 1951

An Excerpt

Does not surrender consist in offering one's work like a good servant?

WORK is a good discipline. But it is not this idea, it is not the idea of a passive, unconscious and almost involuntary submission. It is not that. It does not lie only in work

The most important surrender is the surrender of your character, your way of being, so that it may change. If you do not surrender your very own nature, never will this nature change. It is this that is most important. You have certain ways of understanding, certain ways of reacting, certain ways of feeling, almost certain ways of progressing, and above all, a special way of looking at life and expecting from it certain things—well, it is this you must surrender. That is, if you truly want to receive the divine Light and transform yourself, it is your whole way of being you must offer—offer by opening it, making it as receptive as possible so that the divine Consciousness which sees how you ought to be, may act directly and change all these movements into movements more true, more in keeping with your real truth. This is infinitely more important than surrendering what one does. It is not what one does (what one does is very important, that's evident) that is the most important thing but what one *is*. Whatever the activity, it is not quite the way of doing it but the state of consciousness in which it is done that is important. You may work, do disinterested work without any idea of personal profit, work for the joy of working, but if you are not at the same time ready to leave this work, to change the work or change the way of working, if you cling to your own way of working, your surrender is not complete. You must come to a point when everything is done because you feel within, very clearly, in a more and more imperious way, that it is this which must be done and in this particular way, and that you do it only because of that. You do not do it because of any habit, attachment or preference, nor even any conception, even a preference for the idea that it is the best thing to do—else your surrender is not total. As long as you cling to something, as long as there is something in you which says, "This may change, that may change, but *that*, that will not change", as long as you say about anything at all, "That will not change" (not that it refuses to change, but because you can't think of its changing), your surrender is not complete

It goes without saying that if in your action, your work, you have in the least this feeling, "I am doing it because I have been told to do it", and there is not a total adherence of the being, and you do not do the work because you feel it

must be done and you love doing it; if something holds back, stands apart, separate, "I was told it had to be done like that so I did it like that", it means there is a great gulf between you and surrender. True surrender is to feel that one wants, one has, this complete inner adherence: you cannot do *but that*, that which you have been given to do, and what you have not been given to do you cannot do. But at another moment the work may change; at any moment it may be something else, if it is decided that it be something else. It is there that plasticity comes in. That makes a very great difference. It is well understood that those who work are told, "Yes, work, that is your way of surrendering", but it is a beginning. This way has to be progressive. It is only a beginning, do you understand?

(*Questions and Answers*, 1951, Cent. Ed., Vol. 4, pp. 372-74)

A LIGHT WITHOUT A NAME

.. the intelligence of man is not composed entirely and exclusively of the rational intellect and the rational will; there enters into it a deeper, more intuitive, more splendid and powerful, but much less clear, much less developed and as yet hardly at all self-possessing light and force for which we have not even a name. But, at any rate, its character is to drive at a kind of illumination,—not the dry light of the reason, nor the moist and suffused light of the heart, but a lightning and a solar splendour. It may indeed subordinate itself and merely help the reason and heart with its flashes; but there is another urge in it, its natural urge, which exceeds the reason. It tries to illuminate the intellectual being, to illuminate the ethical and aesthetic, to illuminate the emotional and the active, to illuminate even the senses and the sensations. It offers in words of revelation, it unveils as if by lightning flashes, it shows in a sort of mystic or psychic glamour or brings out into settled but for mental man almost a supernatural light, a Truth greater and truer than the knowledge given by Reason and Science, a Right larger and more divine than the moralist's scheme of virtues, a Beauty more profound, universal and entrancing than the sensuous or imaginative beauty worshipped by the artist, a joy and divine sensibility which leaves the ordinary emotions poor and pallid, a Sense beyond the senses and sensations, the possibility of a diviner Life and action which man's ordinary conduct of life hides away from his impulses and from his vision. Very various, very fragmentary, often very confused and misleading are its effects upon all the lower members from the reason downward, but this in the end is what it is driving at in the midst of a hundred deformations. It is caught and killed or at least diminished and stifled in formal creeds and pious observances; it is unmercifully traded in and turned into poor and base coin by the vulgarity of conventional religions, but it is still the light of which the religious spirit and the spirituality of man is in pursuit and some pale glow of it lingers even in their worst degradations.

SRI AUROBINDO

(The Human Cycle, Chapter IX)

THE MODERN POLITICIAN

..the modern politician in any part of the world...does not represent the soul of a people or its aspirations. What he does usually represent is all the average pettiness, selfishness, egoism, self-deception that is about him and these he represents well enough as well as a great deal of mental incompetence and moral conventionality, timidity and pretence. Great issues often come to him for decision, but he does not deal with them greatly, high words and noble ideas are on his lips, but they become rapidly the clap-trap of a party The disease and falsehood of modern political life is patent in every country of the world and only the hypnotised acquiescence of all, even of the intellectual classes, in the great organised sham, cloaks and prolongs the malady, the acquiescence that men yield to everything that is habitual and makes the present atmosphere of their lives Yet it is by such minds that the good of all has to be decided, to such hands that it has to be entrusted, to such an agency calling itself the State that the individual is being more and more called upon to give up the government of his activities. As a matter of fact, it is in no way the largest good of all that is thus secured, but a great deal of organised blundering and evil with a certain amount of good which makes for real progress, because Nature moves forward always in the midst of all stumblings and secures her aims in the end more often in spite of man's imperfect mentality than by its means.

SRI AUROBINDO

(The Ideal of Human Unity, Chapter IV)

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

FIVE PERSONAL LETTERS

YOU have asked me. “Is it wrong to tell one’s yogic experiences to an intimate friend?” My answer is: “True intimacy means constant thought by friends of each other’s welfare both outward and inward, an identification by one with the other’s triumphs as well as troubles—a hand immediately goes forth either to help or to felicitate and just as there is a spontaneous sharing of pain an automatic participation in joy takes place. Not a single twinge of envy at one’s companion’s good fortune occurs. It is because of jealous reactions that it is advisable not to share one’s precious experiences with people. Through the envious eye of the hearer the hostile forces attempt to snatch away the benefits of our self-deepenings. Not many realise that our goal here is the Divine Mother’s victory. And if she is victorious anywhere she is potentially victorious everywhere. For the human stuff, which she deals with and works at to transform, is the same in all of us and if she has succeeded in touching it to glory in one place an opening has been made through which her light can reach every place. Among true friends the promise of the pervasiveness of the Divine Action is not difficult to perceive. A beautiful experience of one is a matter for rejoicing by the other: the jealous look is never cast. So it is perfectly right to share with an intimate friend one’s happy uplifting experiences.”

I like the way you have put your morning experience. “A thin layer of darkness still enveloped the sky. One could hear a faint footfall of light in the eastern horizon. A stillness and quietude prevailed all around. I was in my deck-chair looking at the sky. Today one need not meditate. Meditation descends of its own.” My mind goes back to the glorious morning when first Sri Aurobindo showed me his supreme grace by beginning to disclose to me in private his slowly progressing and repeatedly revised masterpiece—the epic *Savitri*. The morning was of October 25, 1936. And part of the passage, with which the poem as it stood at that time opened, ran:

The impassive skies were neutral, waste and still
Then a faint hesitating glimmer broke.
A slow miraculous gesture dimly came.
The insistent thrill of a transfiguring touch
Persuaded the inert black quietude
And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God.
A wandering hand of pale enchanted light
That glowed along the moment’s fading brink
Fixed with gold pane and opalescent hinge
A gate of dreams ajar on mystery’s verge

The last line points me to your phrases: "Today one need not meditate. Meditation descends of its own." For, when there is an opening to the mystery behind the gate of one's aspiring dreams the divine Presence breathes out, as it were, from its golden inwardness and then the very air one inhales is meditation. In my passage I find also a personalising suggestion in the words "gesture", "touch", "hand", which would prepare for what you have termed "a faint footfall of light". And actually Sri Aurobindo, a little later, brings in the Dawn-Goddess's footfall:

Once more a tread perturbed the vacant Vasts..
Earth felt the Imperishable's passage close
The waking ear of Nature heard her steps..

All that you have written is well-inspired and I can intuit our Master emerging from the night's vagueness and enfolding his disciple's mind and heart with a reminiscence of the poem the disciple has deeply loved. Whether in moments when the meditation comes of itself or in those when one sets one's being in accord with the call of sadhana, the Master is ever with you. On November 8 you will feel him lifting you bodily, so to speak, and bearing you across "mystery's verge". I say "bodily" because this day commemorates your ever-existing soul's new embodiment. All the more emphasis I put on the corporeal fact because the Master himself brought his own eternity and infinity to a focus of flesh in our day and met the corporeal fact of us on the level of the human. Our body has a great importance and significance because of this earthly descent of Grace and we should do our best to let it be charged with the inner light in whatever measure we can reflect the visible and tangible phenomenon of divinity we have called Sri Aurobindo:

All heaven's secrecy lit to one face

Yes, with his suffusion of physical form with the presence of Godliness, he has set us an example of divinising the most outward life—life in which the body has to be the transmitter of the illumined soul. Do you remember that ringing pronouncement of Sri Aurobindo's: "I have no intention of giving my sanction to a new edition of the old fiasco"? And what is the farce of long standing which he has refused to accept? He has explained it: "a partial and transient spiritual opening within with no true and radical change in the law of the external nature." Perhaps the most striking illustration of Sri Aurobindo's meaning is an anecdote the Mother has told somewhere. There was a man who had a great capacity of remaining in meditation. He could be absorbed for hours in an inner state which he felt to be wonderful. Once, while he was enjoying his trance, someone knocked at his door—and quite hard, too. The śamadhī-expert got up

from his chair, rushed to the door and throwing it open shouted: “You damned fool, how dare you come at this time? Don’t you know I am with God?” The poor intruder was overwhelmed by that thunder out of heaven and stole away. The Mother’s comment was: “This kind of meditation is worth nothing.”

The outer personality with its petty and egoistic habits of thought, feeling and action has to be irradiated if the Aurobindonian Yoga is to be truly done. The consecration of each movement of our conscious embodied life to the Divine Mother is demanded. There is that command by Sri Aurobindo “Love the Mother. Always behave as if the Mother was looking at you; because she is, indeed, always present.” From the Mother deep within us to the Mother who is everywhere and within everyone our life has to move, guided by—in Sri Aurobindo’s terminology—our “psychic being” and our “spiritual self”. Out of a wide tranquillity beyond “time’s unrest” a consciousness dedicated to Sri Aurobindo has to concentrate and channel itself to the outer world through that in-gathered profundity of shining sweetness and smiling strength which is our inmost heart, our true soul, spontaneously a child of the Divine Mother. When all thought, all word, all deed issue from that circumambient peace and that centre of luminous power into a world of body dealing with body, “the old fiasco” will begin to disappear

I cannot wish you a happier birthday than one in which that body of yours which Sri Aurobindo has blessed and the Mother has caressed will help more and more the Golden Age visioned by our Gurus to gleam forth. (7 11 1990)

*

Of late there has been a strange sense of far-away-ness. Maybe something in me has withdrawn more from the usual run of life—time seems so short for the great goal I have set myself and I am a little impatient; so it is possible the sense I speak of is a result of my present attitude. Not that my love for you has diminished by the slightest, but it is as if I were sending it to you from some spot on the moon rather than from Pondicherry. Perhaps the more correct way of putting things would be that I am myself in two places—one part on earth and one in the midst of a lunar landscape of changeless dream. But the dream is with open eyes and they still blend the pull of the inward with the call of the distant drama of terrestrial movement, in which something in me continues the hope to play a significant and helpful role. (5 5.1985)

*

The account of your travel and your meetings with various people is thought-provoking. What did the wife of Krishnamurty’s personal physician have to say about her husband’s famous patient? Is she one of the bewildered “illuminatees”

trying to practise K's gospel of getting beyond the detailed clinging "time-consciousness" into some grooveless interiority? I may remark that such a gospel is not absent from Sri Aurobindo's teaching. Very clearly he has visioned

The superconscient realms of motionless peace
Where judgment ceases and the word is mute
And the Unconceived lies pathless and alone.¹

But Sri Aurobindo does not end there. His revelation has another aspect:

Timeless domains of joy and absolute power
Stretched out surrounded by the eternal hush,
The ways that lead to endless happiness
Ran like dream-smiles through meditating vasts:
Disclosed stood up in a gold moment's blaze
White sun-steppes in the pathless Infinite.²

In Sri Aurobindo's teaching there is something which can give meaning to the multifarious movement of time and can change it to an evolving projection of the many-ness which is secretly present in an archetypal form in the One whom the Mandukya Upanishad sees to be "without a second". We must not forget that this Upanishad terms the full Reality fourfold and the deepest of the three other statuses, the status which opens into the fourth, is designated "the womb of Brahman". Without abrogating the ultimacy of the unity it is possible in spiritual experience to find this unity endlessly creative without losing its unitary essence. If you will excuse the pun, I may say that in the One "without a second" not only many a second but also many a minute and hour and day and year are a haloed hiddenness—missed by those who try to catch a shadow of the exclusive systems of Buddha and Shankara. These systems had a utility in the past and the core of them cannot be neglected even now. Sri Aurobindo himself started with an overwhelming experience of Nirvana or Silent Brahman. But he had other realisations after it which were just as authentic. They formed with it a greater whole which gave at once an absolute freedom from the time-consciousness and an absolute source of fulfilling the long labour of the earth's ages. (31.1.1986)

*

What has happened is opening up yourself to your own depths and, as a result, revealing the Mother's presence within you more and more. The assurance that has come to you from her has now an intenser tone which is bound to leave a

¹ *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*, 1972 Ed., pp. 35-36

² *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40

lasting reverberation not only in your mind and heart but also in what Sri Aurobindo would call your “nerves of sensation”. I can feel them vibrating all through your two letters. When the period of pain is gone, the vibration will not be so marked in its frequency but a steady movement will continue. It will form a kind of settled music in your most outer consciousness, a keen yet controlled response of this consciousness to the inner Mother in her act of emerging increasingly into the surface of your being and there radiating forth from her child in you to all her children outside you. Not that so far such a thing has never happened. But I think there was a self-awareness during it which made a mixture of your own individuality with the Divine—a very pleasant mixture, no doubt, since you the individual are a very pleasant fellow, but now a certain transparency will be there due to a self-forgetfulness, so that the Divine’s radiation through you will have a sweeter and stronger spontaneity. What I call “self-forgetfulness” may be explained by your own statement that now your opening to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo is “ever-growing” from all the parts of your being.

You have written of my helping you. My prayer has been fervent in two directions. One is for getting you out of the present pain and inconvenience as quickly as possible. The other is for making the quick passage as fully as possible a channel for the Divine’s purpose shining out through the accident—or rather for the accident turning into “a forced march” of the innermost into the outermost by a sustained cry on your part to the Divine to reach out to you across the abnormal circumstances that have caught you up in their whirl.

(28.8.1990)

*

Your account of how your saffron robe and cap carried you triumphantly everywhere in the USA was very enjoyable. It shows that the Americans are sensitive to spiritual symbols and are eager to get in touch with the truth behind them. They must also be perceptive of people’s beings behind their physiognomies and appearances. For the USA has had quite an abundance of fellows claiming to represent Indian wisdom but each of whom my Associate Editor and I used to dub “Swami Bogusananda”. I wish you had held the seminar the chap in the Atlantic City wanted to attend. Perhaps if I had been in that city during your seminar I would have been hard pressed to decide whether to visit the Casinos for which it is famed or listen to my enlightened friend holding forth on the rapturous risks of the soul in this world which Sri Aurobindo has called

The wager wonderful, the game divine.

I recollect also a sentence in *The Life Divine* or in *The Synthesis of Yoga*

about how “the Purusha in a wager with himself” undertook the adventure, the perilous task of creating the stark opposite of everything divine and then starting to manifest his true reality from the inconscient Vivekananda spoke of his God the poor, the miserable, the persecuted. I am inclined to speak of my God the gambler. And I think every mystic in quest of Him is himself one about whom the contented of the world, the observers of limit and measure cry out as in Sri Aurobindo’s “Ahana”:

Who is the nomad then? who is the seeker, the gambler risking
All for a dream in a dream, the old and the sure and the stable
Flung as a stake for a prize that was never yet laid on the table?¹

Indeed I am glad of my God the gambler, for more than most people, even those who with their mystical bent know what Sri Aurobindo further says in the same poem—

All is a wager and danger, all is a chase and a battle—²

I am a queer case for whoever hopes to defy the warning of the worldly-wise:

All things created are made by their borders, sketched out and coded,
Vain is the passion to divinise manhood, humanise godhead ³

If Sri Aurobindo did not exemplify a gambling Avatarhood, would he have ever accepted the hazard of a case like me, such a dangerous complexity of personalities, each with its own demand to be fulfilled—including one that loved to indulge literally in various games of chance with real money involved?

Before I came to Pondicherry at the end of 1927 I knew a theosophist named Venkatachalam, an art-critic by profession. When he happened to know of my spiritual search he told me: “Nobody except Sri Aurobindo will satisfy so complex a person as you.” Strange words issuing from a theosophist with a mind haunted by those “Masters” who control everything in the universe, leaving no room for anyone like Sri Aurobindo to have a significant role anywhere. But this theosophist had been to Pondicherry in the days before the Ashram was formed and had met Sri Aurobindo and he could not help reporting to me: “Sri Aurobindo lives in the cosmic consciousness” I came to Pondicherry swept up on a wave which seemed irresistible. Sober thinking would never have brought me here. I once asked the Mother: “Will the Supermind, when it descends, be able to transform us in spite of ourselves?” She laughed and said: “I should think so!” I exclaimed: “Then there is hope for me!” My situation has only one saving

¹ *Collected Poems*, 1972 Ed., p. 529

² *Ibid.* ³ *Ibid.*

grace. Somehow from the very start I, who had the reputation of being a brainy sort, told the Mother to open me up in the heart. Even on the last occasion I met her—on my birthday before the time she retired completely—my last words were: “Put your hand here (*indicating the middle of my chest*) and open me up.” She put her hand there and, somehow sensing the heart, said. “It is beating very fast ” I answered: “Yes, for I am very impatient now.” She gave me one of her unforgettable smiles.

Luckily a radical beginning was made in the first few months of my stay in the Ashram—some time in mid-1928. I used to feel a pain in my chest every time I sat to meditate. I complained about it to the Mother. She remarked: “Don’t worry. I know what it is. It will go ” And go it did one day when I felt as if a wall had suddenly crumbled down in my chest and a marvellous depth disclosed the fire and fragrance of an ineffable felicity whose very stuff was an incessant spontaneous sense of the Eternal Beloved. The depth has not remained open in that extreme fashion always. But some experience of it has persisted through the years and now and again there has been its outburst. All complexities, all conflicts of the various selves in one, find their point of resolution, their world-forgetting rest, in that “Immortal in the mortal” (to use the Vedic phrase about the Fire-God Agni dwelling within us)

I may add that this In-dweller, building up divinity in our nature, has also been the safeguard of the gambler Amal. In the midst of the thousand dangers—the pull in diverse tempting directions—to which I am exposed, here is an intuitive guide—not with open-eyed knowledge as in the hard-to-reach planes above the mind but with a truth-feeling in secret continuity with the impulses of our vaguely searching emotional self. Here the wagering wanderer finds a centre of repose where the sense of a certainty waiting to be discovered is the bright allure to his bid for a winning bet in this “beautiful and perilous world”, as Sri Aurobindo has called the field of the Supreme Purusha staking all to win all.

(7 11.1990)

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

THE AṢHRAM CHILDREN AND SRI AUROBINDO'S LIFE

A DREAM-DIALOGUE

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1991)

“YES, politics is what we also would like to discuss. We don't really understand it.”

“As if we understand yoga any better!” piped up a small sarcastic voice. (Laughter)

But Sri Aurobindo smilingly explained:

“Maybe you do not know much about yoga, but you have heard a great deal about it. And since the soil that bore you is the land of yoga, it is but natural that you should feel eager to learn more about it. In the beginning, more or less everyone has wrong notions about yoga, and so did I. I believed that to be a yogi, one must give up the worldly life and become an ascetic.”

“Why have you never told us anything about your family life? There are many people who want to know why you, a yogi, got married in the first place.”

“What a foolish thing to say! And I have heard it over and over again. My dear children, did I then know that I was to become a yogi? And besides, there is no need to assert that marriage must necessarily stand in the yogi's way. Do not forget, mine is not the path of asceticism or sannyasa, like that of Shankara or Buddha. Our aim is to accept the world and its activities and yet not be bound by it, to go beyond it, in fact. *Tyaktena bhujjātāḥ*, enjoyment through renunciation as the Isha Upanishad puts it. Actually, in the first place I was not drawn to yoga just because I thought that I would have to give up the world. On the contrary, I was at that time totally involved in the Freedom Movement. My aim was the independence of my motherland, not yogic realisation. When it became clear to me that the pursuit of yoga could bring various occult powers within man's reach, I decided to obtain them, so that, with their help, I might help liberate my country. It was then that I began to be drawn to yoga. That is why I have said that I entered the path of yoga by the back-door.”

“But later, you did give up your home and family to come away to Pondicherry, did you not?”

“You mean, left my wife? Well, more than I, it's God who is responsible for that. A little while ago I told you that ever since the Nirvana state was firmly established in my being, all my life had been guided by the yogic influence and by the Divine Will. Until the day I went to prison, and even after that, I had been a family man. At the time of my arrest, both my wife and my sister were living with me. But the moment God said to me first ‘Go to Chandernagore’ and afterwards ‘Go to Pondicherry’, I left home. Alone. Perhaps you do not know that it was when my wife was on her way here, to Pondicherry, that she took ill, in Calcutta,

and died. So, you see, mine is not the approach of the ascetic. If it had been, I would have lost myself in trance in one of the caves of the Himalayas instead of founding this Ashram in Pondicherry. If that had come to pass, where would Mother have been, and all of you too... in which land, under which sky, who knows? I would not then be telling you my story, but, instead, like the contemplative sage, living in silent communion with trees and birds and beasts. (*Laughter*) By the way, do you think I ever wanted to become a Guru?"

"Didn't Sri Ramakrishna also marry?"

"Yes, he did. He lived with his wife as a yogi. He proved that marriage and yoga are not mutually exclusive. He also showed that the Avatar takes on himself the burden of humanity, he accepts its laws of pain and suffering and division and then shows mankind the way to overcome them. If that were not so, the ordinary man might say that the Avatar, since he does not have to undergo our difficulties and conflicts, finds it very easy to overcome them.

"I took up the responsibilities of a married life long before I entered the path of yoga. I did so by choice. But the moment I realised that I was meant to lead a spiritual life, I tried to prepare my wife too for such a life. Even earlier, when I was involved in the Nationalist Movement, I had sought to share my path with her, so that she might be my support and partner in my endeavour. But this is certain also that I did not get married only for the pleasure and satisfaction that it could bring."

"Didn't she suffer terribly when they arrested you? She hadn't had any spiritual realisations then, had she—"

(*Laughing*) "No, of course not! But she already knew, certainly, that hers was not an ordinary husband, and that the work he had undertaken entailed dangers and difficulties at every step. Besides being a Nationalist leader, I was obliged to be so often away touring the country that she must have got used to my being more of an absentee-husband than anything else."

"But I feel terribly sorry for her."

Sri Aurobindo laughed and said: "That is because you are a girl! But haven't you heard of the Rajput women who smiled as their husbands set off to war, of Uttara who with her own hands helped Abhimanyu put on his armour and of Gandhari choosing to bandage her eyes forever because her husband was blind?"

"Did Mrinalini Devi know that you were a yogi?"

"I used to practise yoga then, but I became a yogi only in 1907. And of course she knew that! At the first opportunity I made it clear to her that I had three overriding madnesses or manias that drove me. Firstly, I believed that all that I possessed, my powers or my talents, my wisdom or my wealth, everything was given to me by God. Secondly, I was going to realise this God. My third dream was to liberate my motherland."

"You are talking about the "Letters to Mrinalini", are you not?"

“Yes, I am, and if you have read that book, then all these questions are quite unnecessary. You also find several references to my domestic life in those letters.”

“They are very beautiful indeed, very very touching. One of our teachers has told us that when she was a little girl she lived next door to Mrinalini. She remembers her lighting incense and putting flowers before your feet in a photo every day, morning and evening. After that she would call all the children, including our teacher, and give them fruits and flowers.”

“Did your sister ever come here?”, one of the children asked.

“Yes, she did, but she couldn’t stay. She wasn’t ready for yoga. Barin came later, but he too had to leave after some years. Now, it’s all of you who make up my spiritual family.” (*Laughter*)

“But we know nothing about yoga!”

“Nor did I, at the outset. Even after I had my first spiritual experiences, my faith remained incomplete, my aspiration imperfect. On the other hand, I knew very well that the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita were founded on absolute truth. It was when I was thus psychologically pulled in different directions that a friend, in Baroda, advised me to take up yoga. He himself practised Hathayoga and Asanas and enjoyed, like all missionaries, drawing others into his fold. But I never responded enthusiastically to him, partly because I had a wrong notion about yoga. For at that time all I wanted was to devote my energies, my powers, my time to the nation. It was the motherland I wished to serve, her freedom which I prayed and fought for. Since I believed that all this had no place in yoga, I had decided that yoga was not for me. When I finally did turn to it, it was with this prayer in my heart—‘Lord, if Thou art, then surely Thou art All-Wise. Thou knowest that I seek neither salvation nor liberation. All I ask for is the Strength to uplift this fallen nation, and to sacrifice my life to her cause.’

“When I realised that by practising yoga one could acquire great powers, I told myself that this then was the way by which I could help my country. Also a few things happened that increased my faith in the Yogic Force. For example one day, when Barin had been lying ill with high ‘hill-fever’ there came to the house a Naga Sannyasi. He took some water, charged it with his power, and gave it to Barin, who quickly recovered. I was so surprised and impressed that I decided to master the secrets of this science. It was a very small incident, almost as insignificant as Newton’s apple. That was when I began practising Pranayama. It was in 1904. I pursued my yogic training and my Nationalistic activities simultaneously. For almost four years I did Pranayama and other yogic exercises for five or six hours a day.”

“Four years! Five or six hours daily!”

(*Laughing*) “Don’t worry. I won’t subject you to such a harsh discipline. And the results I gained from it did not help me particularly in my yoga. Firstly, I found myself being able to write much more and with enormous ease. Formerly,

I could barely compose five or six lines of poetry a day, and in order to write a poem of 150 to 200 lines I would need a whole month. After I began doing Pranayama, I found myself being able to compose 200 lines in less than an hour! It was the same with prose. And this river of inspiration has flowed unchecked ever since, like the Ganges, as it were.

“Pranayama also increased my power of memory as well as developed in me the capacity for subtle vision. I began to see many beings of many forms and it was as if my head was surrounded by a force of lightning. I even improved physically. My health grew better, my skin smoother, and my very complexion became lighter. I felt a sweet taste in my mouth. It was the ladies of the house, who first noticed the growing changes in my appearance and my complexion. Women are always quick to observe these things, aren't they?” (*Laughter*)

“But were you indeed dark?”

“Yes, quite dark.”

“It's hard to believe! You are so golden now!”

(*With a smile*) “But true all the same. That was the first thing my father-in-law wanted to know when he came here for the Darshan. whether it was true that I was no longer dark. Another interesting thing that occurred then was about the mosquitoes. They swarmed and buzzed all around me but never bit me. I had become a vegetarian by then and the body felt much lighter and purer.

“Once I noticed an American gentleman observing me very carefully during the Darshan. Apparently he wanted to find out the nature of the light that he saw around me and whether it had a physical explanation. Only when he could not find one did he believe me to be a realised being, a Mahatma!

“There is an interesting story regarding the sweet taste of the saliva in the mouth. There is an order of the Naga Sannyasis, whose aim it is to acquire that sweetness in the mouth, because it is supposed to make man immortal. The required discipline for this is called ‘Khecharimudra’. The tip of the tongue has to be slit and certain practices are to be followed with the slit tongue, as a result of which a sweetness comes down from the head into the saliva. This is called ‘Amrita Rasa’ or the nectar of immortality. Once this happens, you can conquer death, you need not die. But if you make a mistake and do not bring down the right essences, you go mad. At one time, Barin fell in with these Sannyasis. One of them tempted him with many promises and powers. But Barin absolutely refused to slit his tongue. They then taunted him, calling him ‘You Bengali coward!’ Barin replied adamantly, ‘Bengali I may be and coward too, but I am on no account ready to have my tongue cut! Absolutely not!’ ” (*Laughter*)

“Could you please explain to us what Pranayama exactly is? We know what Asanas are; we take lessons from Ambu for that.”

“It is rather difficult to describe Pranayama to you in a few simple sentences. But the word ‘Pranayama’ means the mastery over the forces of Prana, of life. It implies that the life-force in a person depends upon the

inhalation and exhalation of the breath Pranayama is a form of breath-control. If the breathing follows a particularly disciplined pattern or system of inhaling, holding and exhaling air, it helps to open up many of the centres of life-energy in the being. Pranayama is one of the disciplines that is specially followed in Hathayoga as well as partially in Rajayoga ”

“But what has this to do with the ability to write poetry?”

“Pranayama helps to cleanse the mind and make it quiet, so that many of the higher and inner centres of energy begin to open. For example, the power of poetic composition is born of inspiration and by inspiration we mean that which comes down or is sent down The ideal condition for the descent of this power is a perfectly silent mind In our yoga too, we lay great stress on mental silence and quietude One of the ways of obtaining such a silence is Pranayama It is a subtle science and, if it is rightly followed, it can help us enormously in our progress. But, on the other hand, it can have disastrous results if it is not performed correctly Indeed, I underwent a terrible experience, myself, not because I had made any mistakes in doing Pranayama, but because I was practising very irregularly, due to a great pressure of work Consequently, I fell seriously, almost fatally ill. Yet I also gained from it such wonderful, almost miraculous powers that the being was completely caught up in them and became unable to progress further. At that point, I had to ask a yogi to help me.”

“But I still have not understood what yoga is and how to practise it (*Laughter*) Are you telling us that Pranayama is yoga?”

“Yes. According to the traditional spiritual systems both Pranayama and Asanas are considered essential in the pursuit of Yogic discipline. That is why, while I have been talking to you about various events, I have been specifying whether they occurred before or after I had taken up yoga. Perhaps your difficulty in understanding stems from the fact that you don’t find these practices being strictly followed in the Ashram. Isn’t that so?”

“Exactly.”

“You see, in our yoga, we don’t need them The Mother’s and my yoga is based on the essence of all the other systems; it is therefore a new and Integral Yoga. The realisations that are obtained by following other yogas can be had in ours too without your having to perform Pranayama and Asanas for 7 or 8 hours. Do you think you could have trained yourself to do all those things?”

“Goodness, no! Our life is just fine as it is—we go to school, have fun, eat well We get to see the Two of you at the Darshan, and go to Mother on our birthdays She takes our classes too and talks to us about so many things. What have we to worry about? Certainly not yoga!” (*Laughter*)

“You don’t have to You’re all very young and your studies are your sadhana, as the Sanskrit saying goes. The one thing you must always remember is to do what the Mother asks you to, obey Her in all things. If you love Her and have faith in Her, She will do everything for you ”

“And what about you?”

(*Smiling*) “It’s the same thing. But since the Mother is always with you, close to you. She has taken the entire charge of your lives, whereas I remain in the background. At the most, I tell you a few stories, write you some letters, give you my ‘Darshan’. It’s always the mothers who look after the children in a family, isn’t it so? And as far as the yoga is concerned, we are doing it for you.”

“You are doing it for us?”

“Who do you think we are doing it for? Do you think we have any needs of our own?”

“Nirod-da once read out to us in class your answer to a letter of his—the one where he asked for a small seat tucked away somewhere in your train.”

(*Laughing*) “And what did I write to him?”

“You told him that that was exactly what you were busy doing—reserving seats for poor Nirod-da and for many others like him.” (*Laughter*)

(*To be continued*)

NIRODBARAN

(*Translated by Jhumur from the Bengali*)

SHRI NAVAJATA ANNUAL MEMORIAL LECTURE

(This is the first part of the lecture delivered by Dr. Nirodbaran at Pondicherry University on the 21st and 22nd January 1991. The subject chosen was "Sri Aurobindo as revealed in his Correspondence with me" The occasion was presided over by Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar.)

It is very creditable on the part of the Sri Aurobindo Society to organise annual lectures in memory of their founder and leader Shri Navajata, commonly and endearingly known as Bhaiji (Revered Brother). It is at the same time an honour conferred on me by the Society to be the lecturer this year. I am glad to take it as an opportunity to begin my speech with a homage to this great instrument of the Mother.

On life's magic screen many figures cast their shadows, some faint, some clear, some fiery, some ethereal. One forgets them, effaced by others more refulgent and carrying star-spangled banners. You almost feel they are not of human mould, their eyes speak a language beyond the ken of mortal tongues; their strides cannot be measured by known yardsticks. They conquer or fail on the way, but they have lived, done their work and retired to the sphere from where they came.

Can one say that Navajata was one of those mighty souls who became an uncanny instrument of the Divine Mother and turned some of her dreams into puissant realities?

On reading the delightful book by him, *A Divine Life in a Divine Body*, and going by what I have heard and known about him, I have no doubt that he was one of them. This book coming fresh from the mint bears out the secret truth of it. It is glowing with his dynamic faith in the Mother and his power of casting a magic spell over the people he met. I was surprised also to find that in the midst of his whirlwind activities, he had time to read the books of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and other writers and could talk about them extempore in the several meetings he addressed during his world tour. I can understand how he could hypnotise and convert people to his views, always supported by the practical experience he derived from his contact with the Mother. I also understand why the Mother noticed him as a young boy from among a crowd and enquired who the boy was. One single glance sealed the destiny of that boy and all that he has done was the outcome of it. Later on, I shall give a few instances by way of illustration from this book.

I did not have much personal contact with him, our life-lines ran in different directions to the same goal. My first indirect contact was in the forties when I had started playing tennis. I needed a good racket, I had no rich 'bhaktas' at that time. A friend suggested that I should write to Navajata, he was generous and would be too glad to send one. Specially since I was serving Sri Aurobindo I

hesitated for some time but finally succumbed to the temptation. He sent at once one of the finest rackets available at the time. I was naturally much moved by his benign gesture. The second time I heard about him was when the Mother was speaking to Sri Aurobindo about his proposal to publish a fortnightly review from Bombay to propagate Sri Aurobindo's views on the political and other problems of the country. He wanted an efficient editor and suggested the name of Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna) to the Mother. It was agreed on, and the paper started in February 1949, bearing the title *Mother India*. It is still continuing its career with appreciable success.

After Sri Aurobindo's passing, Navajata found, along with his family, his permanent home under the protective wings of the Mother, and he surrendered all his property to her. Soon she directed his native genius to its proper channel and the Society was founded. Not long after, when rooms were built for him in the Ashram compound, I used to observe visitors daily streaming in to meet Bhaji as he had now come to be called. Well-dressed, well-placed people startled the quiet and simple tenor of our life. It seemed as if the people of the North particularly had found a secret mine here and that Navajata had the key to it. I thought it would be well for the Ashram financially if Navajata could draw the moneyed class to the service of the Mother. He became one of the principal instruments of the Mother's work and his influence extended even to the high circles of the Government. He did some good turns to me at that time which I still remember. I also helped him in a small way by giving him primary lessons in French at the behest of the Mother. It appears to have stood him in good stead when he attempted to speak in French in the UNESCO.

Now his activities fanned out more and more. All over India he kindled flames, breathed far and wide the mantric names of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, the Avatars of a New Age, and drew the eyes of the rich and the poor, the high and the low in one direction, Pondicherry, through the agency of the Society. Extending beyond the seas, he carried the new gospel of a Divine Race and stirred mortal destiny to a dream of Immortality. Seekers began to pour in and returned with their hearts fired with an incandescent glow. In this manner the fame of the Ashram and its baptised progeny, the Sri Aurobindo Society, spread world-wide within the span of a few years, thanks to the undying faith and zeal of the Mother's instrument. I believe it was around this time that one who was originally Keshav Dev Poddar became Navajata, the name signifying "New-born".

The Mother's son André told me that it was through the Society that Europe came to know about the Ashram.

Money also began to flow in from all quarters.

Let me quote here two significant missions Navajata fulfilled as an emissary of the Mother. In his book he gives a fascinating account of how faith works. He writes:

“In 1970 the Sri Aurobindo Centenary Committee was formed. When I returned from the tour, the Mother suddenly told me ‘You have to go to UNESCO to propose a resolution on Sri Aurobindo’ Then, She added, ‘But you don’t like France, you don’t speak French’ I said, ‘Mother, I like France, I speak tolerably good French.’ She said, ‘Then why don’t you go?’ When I came home I found my passport had expired and I had no money. I said to myself, I am not a member of the Indian delegation, my passport has expired, how will I go? Besides, the UNESCO session had already started and the Indian delegation was formed and would be leaving in a day or two

“The next day there was the Centenary Committee meeting in Delhi which I had to attend. So I phoned up Madras for a ticket. They said there was no ticket available. When I asked for the Station Manager, a friend of mine, I was told he was on leave. So I thought that it was all finished, I could not go. From my house I went to the Ashram—a few houses away—and on the way I prayed ‘Sri Aurobindo, you are sending me to Paris and you don’t even get me a ticket to Delhi. How is it going to work?’ When I returned home, my secretary comes and tells me, ‘There is a letter in the mail from the passport office’ (Now this is amazing. Why did the letter not come two days earlier? Why did the Mother not send it to me one week earlier? The Divine is testing our faith all the time and the Mother has said that there is a choice before us at every step, all the time. There is not one moment when the choice is not there.) The passport officer had written that he had just joined his office, he wanted to have the Mother’s darshan and his friends had told him to write to me. So I asked my Secretary to ring him up and tell him that the darshan would be arranged, but to let them renew my passport immediately.

“Suddenly, a trunk call came from a friend of mine in Delhi. He said, ‘Bhaiji, we have a very important meeting and we want you to come.’ I told him, ‘I want to come but there is no ticket.’ He said, ‘Within half an hour I will advise you about your ticket. You will be our guest, we will pay for all the expenses of your hotel stay and for everything else.’ So I said, ‘O K.’ Now, you see, why the ticket was not available. If I would have got the ticket, my friend in Delhi would not have paid for it.

“After the meeting in Delhi I told the Education Minister, ‘There is a resolution to be passed on Sri Aurobindo in UNESCO and you have not taken anybody from the Ashram’. He said, ‘Why don’t you come along, we will go and ask the Prime Minister now.’ He asked her and she said, ‘Yes, surely he should go.’ So I became a member of the delegation in five minutes! I was given a letter to the Reserve Bank for foreign exchange. I went to their office at four-thirty in the afternoon. There, one officer told me that I would first have to get the permission from the Reserve Bank in Bombay. I was in a fix, because time was running out. But the Director said, ‘I know you. I have worked in the Reserve Bank at Madras. You don’t worry. You don’t waste your money on a trunk call

You will have the exchange by five ' And sure enough, I had the exchange by five. The next day we left for Paris

"What happened at the UNESCO session is another story When I moved the resolution on Sri Aurobindo I found that UNESCO had decided to take a vote. They do not normally take a vote and we had not, therefore, talked to the other delegations. I thought the resolution would be lost So I prayed. 'Sri Aurobindo, now I can do nothing The resolution is already moved ' I had found that some people were voting for us but one entire bloc just sat still On my right was the Hungarian leader who told me, 'I have read Sri Aurobindo ' On my left was the Indonesian delegate and he said, 'I have been to Pondicherry.' But these fellows were just not voting So again I prayed. Suddenly, I saw that one by one the hands started going up and the resolution was passed. But what is amusing is that after the meeting the representative of one of the countries came over to me and said, 'We have voted for you but we don't believe in what you say '

"I had no money when I left, as I told you, but money just poured in, and by the time I was ready to return home. I had such a surplus I could have toured for another year without any difficulty.

"The second incident happened in Calcutta.

"Once the Mother gave me a very important assignment in Calcutta I did not even know Bengali She gave me the power of attorney and instructions for immediate disposal of a large piece of land which was offered to Her, as She needed the money. This was the time when refugees from East Bengal had squatted on this land, so nobody would buy it Though the Government was thinking of regularising and paying the money to the people, nothing had been done and the refugees had occupied the land I am relating this to show you how Karma Yoga operates in one's life in every detail At that time I was not in Calcutta. I was in Bombay, but the Mother gave me instructions to go and do this work in Calcutta. So I went there with only one or two days at my disposal, and I did not know what to do Somebody suggested that I should meet the Chief Minister. I went without an appointment to meet him at the Writers Building. At the gate I sent in my name to the Secretary and somehow I was allowed to go in. When I went there I said, 'I want to meet the Chief Minister, Mr. Y' I was asked if I had an appointment. I had none. They told me that I could not see him in that case So I sat in the reception room and prayed Why did God bring me here if an appointment had to be fixed in advance? It was in response to His guidance that I had come here Just then, a special officer came out and asked me if I had come from the Ashram in Pondicherry When I told him that I had, he said, 'The Chief Minister will see you.' So without an appointment, without any influence, without any contact, I was taken in to see him (I think it was 1951 or 1952) I told the Chief Minister that Sri Aurobindo had left His body, that we were building a memorial to Him, and that it would be known as Sri Aurobindo International University. I also told him that since he was the Chief Minister of

West Bengal he should help. He said that he would like to help, but added, 'You know businessmen; if I ask money from them today, they will come to me for a favour tomorrow.' I told him that I was not asking him to collect funds. He then asked in what way he could help. I told him he could take the land which we had in Calcutta and on which the refugees had squatted, and make the payment to me. To this he agreed and immediately sent for his commissioner for acquisition. The commissioner said, 'Sir, this cannot be done, there are legal problems.' Mr. Y told him in my presence that he had given his word to me and a way had to be found to do it.

"This is most interesting; if I had gone through the regular channel, this proposal would never have been recommended, but because I went to him directly (and Mr. Y was a man of his word), all along he saw to it that it went through, even though there were many hurdles. The government officials said that the price I was asking for was very high. They said that they had a ceiling. So I asked them whether subject to the Mother's approval, they would be willing to give me the same price for all the lands. They agreed. I said I would stay a day and confirm it. The meeting finished in just seven or eight minutes. I then sent a telegram to the Mother and She confirmed it. I told the Chief Minister that the acquisition proceedings normally take several years, but I wanted the money now. He said that they would immediately notify and, if I would give them an indemnity bond and let their people examine the title deeds, they would give us ninety per cent in advance. I asked Mr. Y, 'Why ninety per cent? If you are taking an indemnity bond, why not give me hundred per cent? Why make me run after the Government for the balance ten per cent?' So he said, 'All right, as a special case I will give you hundred per cent.' The land acquisition collector was instructed to issue a notification. I went to the acquisition collector's office. Let me tell you what happened there.

"A man came out of his cabin and asked me what I wanted. I told him I had come from Pondicherry and explained the nature of the work. He told me that he was the additional collector and a devotee of the Ashram and would be happy to help but it was his colleague, another additional collector, who looked after this work. (You see, I would have normally gone to the other man. Just then why should this man have to come out?) He introduced me to his colleague who asked me to have all the documents listed—the survey numbers, area details, and so on after which the officers would examine the papers and then proceed. I had not briefed any lawyer because I wanted to save all the money for the Mother's work. The other additional collector whom I had first met, told me on his own that I need not waste money on a lawyer, he himself would list all the documents and submit them to his colleague and let the office examine the papers. So he sat through the whole night examining all the title deeds. Wherever he found any mistakes he corrected them and those which he found absolutely clear, he listed them. I took the papers to the office superintendent.

The superintendent was busy and would not examine my documents. The Mother had sent an urgent message from Pondicherry that She needed the money soon. So I tried to persuade this man but he would not listen. I said to myself, this is beyond me. I cannot persuade this man. I prayed and left it to the Divine, and went home a bit dejected. I would not say I was totally dejected, but I had this feeling I could not persuade this man any more: I had tried my best. The next day when I again went to his office I found he had already examined and cleared my documents. So this was a new experience for me. When I was trying my best, nothing happened, but when I left everything to the Divine, the work got done. And the first cheque went to the Ashram under his signature. It was amazing to witness how these things worked out.”

I think it was in connection with this incident that once a friend told me how faith can move mountains. “Once,” he said, “the Mother called me and said ‘I want two crores of rupees. I will give you two years’ time. Can you get them for me? You will have my power with you.’ I could not accept the offer, I lacked faith and courage. Then She made the same offer to Navajata. He accepted it and carried out the mission.”

I remember Pradyot, my close friend, had a similar faith in the Mother.

The highest achievement, however, and the culmination of Navajata’s work found its embodiment in Auroville, the City of Dawn, visioned by the Mother and executed by this daring and faithful disciple of hers. Its foundation day was marked by the congregation of thousands of visitors from far and near, their representatives carrying the sacred earth of their respective countries and pouring it into the central marble urn while the prophetic utterance of the Divine Mother rang out among the silent throng, blazoning the message of the unity of mankind. Navajata alone, fired with the Divine Mother’s *ādes*, could bring the enormous funds needed, get the basic work done and make the seeming-impossible possible. The Mother said of him, “He is like a child full of enthusiasm for everything, that is why I like him.”

Next comes the Matri Mandir, that unparalleled conception of the Mother. Its foundation took place one early morning. A large sacrificial fire was lit whose million tongues shot upward as if from the colossal body of the Vedic God Agni, the priest of the sacrifice.

Here too Navajata’s name is memorable as the overall organiser of this concrete symbol of the Soul of Auroville—a unique edifice rising step by step almost imperceptibly upon a land whose future may be anticipated by these lines of magic splendour from Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan*:

So, twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round;

And there were gardens bright with glorious rills,
Where blossomed many an incense bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery

Such was Navajata, the unflagging, variously creative leader of a band of workers dedicated to the Ideal of Perfection set forth flaming in our groping world by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

RECOGNITION

TREMBLING of your eye-lids—
Like the first flutter of wings
Signalling that dawn is coming—
Tells that someone is waking
Within.
A new world awaits
Creation, recognition.

DINKAR PALANDE

INDIAN POETRY IN ENGLISH—AN OVERVIEW

INDIAN Writing in English came to be recognised as a separate entity only after the English had left India. Till Independence, it was treated as a minor branch of English literature. Great names in pre-Independence Indian Writing in English like Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu found mention in histories of English literature. Even Indian scholars refused to accept the separate identity of Indian Writing in English till Indian writers of the 'fifties such as R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Nissim Ezekiel descended on these sceptics and converted them into admirers with their excellent contributions in the field. With the emergence of a distinct style, idiom and stature for Indian Writing in English immediately after Independence, one could hear the oft-repeated question 'Why do Indians write in English?' as if only then the Indians had begun writing and speaking in English. In fact, even before the novelists and the poets began to express their creativity in English, orators like Swami Vivekananda and Srinivasa Sastry, socio-political leaders like Gokhale, Gandhiji and Nehru, a philosopher statesman like Dr. Radhakrishnan, and an illumined seer like Sri Aurobindo had made prolific contributions to thought and culture through English and the quality of the English these men used had been the envy of even the native English speakers and writers. Rabindranath Tagore's works translated into English by himself, especially the *Gitanjali*, had already altered the preconceived notions of the western audience about the Indian's capacity for creative writing of the highest order.

For the creative Indian writer English became a language of self-discovery. Indian identity was made the focal point of creativity in English as an attempt to return to Indianness and to a new critical spirit. The writers looked on English as a filter to separate the best and the worst in India's inheritance in the light of their assimilation of the western cultural norms. It gave them an excuse to escape from the scholasticism of classical learning and the vocabulary of disputation and an opportunity to realise the contact with the educated Indian middle class. In fact, the Indian writer in English, by employing an alien language for a creative purpose, was fighting a battle against his own fascination for an alien way of life. It is his attempt to remain Indian in spite of learning English.

Today Indian Writing in English has come to stay. It is one of the new voices in which India speaks to the world. Since Raja Ram Mohan Roy wrote the first piece of Indian writing in English, *A Defence of Hinduism* in 1817, there has been a definitive development and diversification in form and content, style and technique in Indian Writing in English.

Indian poetry in English had its humble beginnings during the period of the Indian Renaissance, unleashed by the spread of education and study of English that had begun in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Keshab Chandra Sen were the pioneers of this Renaissance. The

earliest book of English verse by an Indian was *Viswagunadarshana*, a translation from Sanskrit, published in 1825. In 1830 a young man named Kashi Prasad Ghosh, who had passed out of the Hindu College, Calcutta, published a collection of poems entitled *The Star and Other Poems* and claimed that he was the first Indian who ventured to publish a volume of English verse. However, three years earlier in 1827 another young poet had already published his first collection of poems in English. He was Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, the first significant voice in Indian poetry in English. Though Derozio had very little Indian blood in him, he was born and brought up in India, he taught Indian students in an Indian college and wrote poetry inspired by Indian themes and sentiments. He was not only a poet and teacher but also a revolutionary thinker and social reformer. He was the 'marvellous boy' of Indian English literature for, like Chatterton, he died young—at the age of 23. Derozio wrote obviously under the influence of the English Romantics notably Byron and Shelley. He wrote narrative poems, lyrics and sonnets which exhibit a great concern for man and nature. The most well-known of his poems, *The Fakir of Jungheera*, is a narrative epic in 52 sections and is inspired by his zeal for social reform. It tells the tragic story of an unlucky Brahmin widow, Nuleeni, who is saved by her Muslim lover when she is about to commit sati on the funeral pyre of her old husband only to die soon after in the arms of her dead lover. Derozio was a poet of love and death, passion and frustration and patriotism when Indian nationalism was still unborn.

A worthy successor to Derozio was Toru Dutt who also died very young. Her personality and genius were shaped by western influences, but she never lost touch with the Indian ethos. She was the most Indian among the poets of the 19th century and her most popular work *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* shows how her poetic genius and creative energies were moulded by Indian thought and traditions. Each of the nine legends she adopted from the Indian classics exemplified the immortal values and verities of life conceived by our rishis and savants. Among her non-mythological poems *Our Casuarina Tree* is the most well-known. Her life was marked by tragedy and beauty. Her greatness as a poet was that she touched the chord of our racial and religious ethos by her inimitable rendering of the deathless stories from the Indian classics. She was the first literary interpreter of India to the West.

The romantic overtones in early Indian poetry in English found their fullest expression in the ringing and colourful verse of Sarojini Naidu. She was a poet with a cosmopolitan and secular outlook. One of the leaders of our freedom movement, Sarojini Naidu found time to publish three collections of poems and a fourth collection was published posthumously. There is hardly any aspect of Indian life she has left untouched in her poetry. In spite of her fiery patriotism and national pride, her poetry is free from political claptrap. In the poem 'The Bird of Time' she hints at the variegated panorama of her themes thus:

Songs of the glory and gladness of life,
 Of poignant sorrow and passionate strife,
 And the liting joy of the spring,
 Of hope that sows for the years unborn,
 And faith that dreams of tarrying morn,
 The fragrant peace of the twilight's breath
 And the mystic silence that men call death

A host of less prominent poets contributed to the growth of Indian poetry in English in the 19th century. Among them the most original was Michael Madhusudan Dutt, the author of the narrative poem *The Captive Lady*. It is based on an historic legend and is distinguished by romantic and lyrical qualities. In 1870 Govin Chunder Dutt, the father of Toru Dutt, brought out the famous *Dutt Family Album*, a collection of poems by the members of the Dutt family. Ramesh Chandra Dutt, a cousin of Toru Dutt, translated the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* into English and wrote several other original poems. Manmohan Ghosh, brother of Sri Aurobindo, was a scholar poet whose several poetical works exhibit a happy blending of Indian and European traditions. His *Love Songs and Elegies* and *Songs of Love and Death* contain poems of exotic beauty, excruciating agony and sublimity of pathos. Three other poets of considerable reputation in their lifetime were Khabardar, Behramji Malabari, and N. V. Pai.

Though Rabindranath Tagore wrote all his poems except one in Bengali, their English translations added to the lustre of Indian Poetry in English. *Gitanjali* which reads like an original English poem in prose brought him the Nobel Prize for literature. Tagore's sensitive portrayal of the Vaishnavite concept of the soul's yearning for the Divine, his humanism and mysticism, his love of nature and the enchanting symbolic language and style he employed brought him immortal fame not only in his own country but throughout the world. He is a world poet.

Sri Aurobindo is the most original voice in Indian Poetry in English in the first half of this century. His poetic compositions are mystical and spiritual. He was a yogi, a patriot, a philosopher, a prose-writer, a playwright and a prophet. His great epic *Savitri: a Legend and a Symbol* and his earlier narratives—*Urvashi*, *Love and Death*, *Baji Prabhu*—show an excellent use of blank verse. In spite of their highly esoteric nature, short poems such as 'The Rose of God' and 'Thought the Paraclete' are remarkable for their visionary quality and skilful use of language. They are examples of how Sri Aurobindo could achieve in English verse the rhythm and tone of the Vedic mantras. One of his most admirable and original contributions is the epic, *Iliad*, nearly 5000 lines, in quantitative hexameters which use a combination of the natural English stress and a play of quantitatively long and short syllables such as make up the metrical structure in Greek and Latin.

The high noon of romanticism vanished with Sarojini Naidu who stopped writing in 1917. The period between 1920 and 1947 which can be called the Gandhian age was marked by the growth of democratic urges and inspired by the ideals of patriotism, liberty and equality. However, these stirrings in the Indian consciousness did not produce a correspondingly powerful poetry of patriotism. In fact, the poets of this period were dormant romantics. Poets like K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran by his Ashram name) and Nirodbaran are disciples of Sri Aurobindo and follow in the footsteps of the great Master with success in a rare type of poetic creation expressive of profound inner realities. Nolini Kanta Gupta, Pujalal, Romen and some others too belong to the Aurobindonian school. All members of it have their own individual accents. Its most revealing publication is "*Overhead Poetry*". *Poems with Sri Aurobindo's Comments*—a book amply illustrating not only what Sri Aurobindo has called "The Future Poetry" but what we may term "The Future Criticism" as well. Also deserving to be listed is Dilip Kumar Roy's fine work under the influence of Sri Aurobindo. Two feminine voices dedicated to the spiritual line of verse connected with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram need to be mentioned. The sadhika who published her poems under the name "Thémis" and the devotee Minnie N. Canteenwalla whose *Deep Footprints* came out a few years back have a notable lyrical vein at once delicate and deep.

There were academic poets such as G. K. Chettur, Armando Menezes (the most gifted among them), Joseph Furtado, V. N. Bhushan and others. Two poets, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya and Manjeri Isvaran, stand apart because of their copious lyrical abilities, though their themes are different and qualities dissimilar. Some of the former's poems reach a high level of insight and beauty.

Modern Indian Poetry in English began to evolve in the decade after the close of the Second World War. The coming of Independence in 1947 and the emergence of the new poetry in England, France and the United States gave altogether new thematic visions and stylistic innovations to a host of our poets, mostly academicians, who began to write in the fifties. The Writers' Workshop founded in 1958 by P. Lal, one of the popular poets of the time, gave encouragement to the new poets by publishing their poetry in book form. Post-Independence Indian Poetry in English is remarkable in its vitality and diversity and since its inception it has had a chequered growth and today, after four decades, it stands amazed at its own richness.

Chief among the poets who heralded the modern movement in Indian Poetry in English are Nissim Ezekiel, P. Lal, A. K. Ramanujan, Dom Moraes, Shiv K. Kumar and Kamala Das. Caught in the vortex of the new tendencies brought about by the dawn of Independence, the new poets represented an Indian ethos quite different and antagonistic to the one represented by earlier poets like Sarojini Naidu, Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. The emergence of India as one nation instilled an air of confidence but soon patriotism gave place to

internal dissensions and a loss of certitude. Aspiration and hope, faith and affinity were replaced by cynicism, self-criticism, alienation and ironic assessment. The new poets, most of them educated in the western system, turned to the West seeking models on which to base their poetry. They hesitated to look into their own country's glorious poetic traditions because most of them were aliens in their own country, as a result of their westernised education and secular ideology. They derived inspiration from poets like T. S. Eliot, Yeats, Auden, Lowell and Sylvia Plath and looked down upon our own classical and recent poets. But soon the poets began to search for authentic roots in their own culture and the best poetry of this period reflects a sense of alienation, an intense quest for self-identity and a sense of disillusionment with the existing social and moral structures. The inner disharmony caused by social and personal derangement is reflected in the upstart themes, loose structure of the poems and in their disregard for grammar and syntax and in their bold indifference to criticism.

The living high priest of Indian Poetry in English is Nissim Ezekiel, a Maharashtrian Jew, who has deeply studied Hindu philosophy. He is acutely conscious of his ethnic alienation from the Indian society. His first collection of poems *A Time to Change* was published in 1952. Since then he has published six more volumes of poetry among which *The Unfinished Man* and *The Hymns in Darkness* are most significant. Ezekiel's poems display a variety of moods ranging from disillusionment to resignation, alienation to cynical involvement. His poem 'Background, Casually' analyses the agony of alienation and affirms his determination to belong to the city and the country of his birth at any cost. The latter day psalms show his religious sensibility punctuated with satiric overtones and poems like 'The Night of the Scorpion' meditate over evil and suffering. A. K. Ramanujan, who is settled in America but whose roots are here, is a poet of tenuous sensibility and sophisticated technical skill. Most of his poems in his collections such as *The Striders* and *Relations* are explorations into familial experiences of childhood. His search for roots and belongingness does not stop at the superficial level but penetrates into the deepest layer of the universality of all life. A similar search for the self leads another poet R. Parthasarathy to an exploration of the possibilities of language in a defunct culture. In *Rough Passage* Parthasarathy exposes the crisis in the educated Indian psyche due to the simultaneous and often conflicting influences of Indian and Western culture. Like Ramanujan he also probes into the family and interpersonal relationships to discover the self. Shiv K. Kumar deals with a range of Indian themes in which he portrays an intensely felt emotion with great irony. Several of the poems in *Articulate Silence* and *Subterfuges* are autobiographical bristling with a pure Indianness expressed in an ironic and satiric mode. Kamala Das, the most prominent among the women poets writing in English, is a controversial poet whose explorations into the love-hate relationship between husband and wife have offended many a conventional poetry reader. In *Summer*

in *Calcutta, Descendants* and *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* the prominent theme is love that turns into lust and the frustration that follows. In most of her poems she peels off the layers of her personality until the true self is discovered. Underlying some of her more sober poems there is a celebration of Krishna-bhakti, devotion to Lord Krishna instilled in her from early childhood by her family devoted to the worship of the Lord at Guruvayoor.

P. Lal, the enterprising founder of the Writers' Workshop, is a sensitive and accomplished lyrical poet. There is a mild confessional note in some of his poems as in the poetry of Kamala Das. *The Parrot's Death* and *Love's the First* are two of his more important collection of poems. Dom Moraes began writing under the influence of Eliot, Auden and Spender. He has several volumes of poems to his credit among which *A Beginning* and *John Nobody* are significant. His poetry is marked by confessional and symbolic overtones. Arun Kolatkar is another significant poet whose magnum opus *Jejuri*, a poem in 31 sections, draws a parallel to life from birth to death. The central metaphor is that of a pilgrimage for life and the poem gives a glimpse into Hindu philosophy.

Some of the bilingual poets such as V. K. Gokak, Amrita Pritam, Mardhekar and Dilip Chitre also contributed to the growing bulk of Indian Poetry in English during this period.

Among the new generation of poets who came to prominence after 1970 the most significant are Keki N. Daruwalla, Jayanta Mahapatra, Gieve Patel, Pritish Nandy, A. K. Mehrotra, K. D. Katrak, Adil Jussawalla and Sarat Chandra. Two prominent women poets of the period are Gauri Deshpande and Monika Varma. This list is not exhaustive. The contributions of these poets and a host of others show that Indian Poetry in English has come of age. It has diversified into fields unimaginable by poets half a century ago. There is a vitality and variegated richness in their poems encompassing the whole panorama of the Indian situation. Keki N. Daruwalla's *Keeper of the Dead*, Jayanta Mahapatra's *Life Signs*, Jussawalla's *Land's End*, Pritish Nandy's *On Either Side of Arrogance*, Monika Varma's *Dragonflies, Draw Flame*, Gauri Deshpande's *Between Births* and K. D. Katrak's *Diversions by the Wayside* are some of the outstanding contributions to Indian Poetry in English during the last 25 years.

The growth of Indian Poetry in English, especially during the last forty years has proved several of the assumptions of the pure academics of yester years absurd. It has disproved that Fowlerian English is the only correct one, that western literary theories propounded by Richards and Ogden should rule the concept of metre and rhythm, that grammatical errors of Indians are Indianisms and that reputable English writers do not write bad grammar.

However, it is to be conceded that modern Indian English Poetry, in spite of its insight into certain aspects of the Indian ethos, has not come to grips with the essentials of Indian experience. Except for *Savitri*, we have not yet produced a large-scale masterpiece. The Indian English poet moves as if on the periphery of

an age-old culture. The sensibility of the modern Indian English poet is disagreeably élite. His poetry smacks of remoteness from the essential sources of experience and like Ezekiel's 'borrowed top' refuses to spin

If the great upsurge of Indian poetry in English is not to lose its creative buoyancy, its practitioners should assimilate Indian poetic and critical traditions to the full and strive for a more genuine Indian expression. Technical control, verbal expertise and pleasing cynical and ironic modes are not enough to establish a poetic tradition. As Raja Rao pointed out long ago, the Indian writer has to acquire an uncramped philosophical vision of the universe and a positive spiritual insight into the mystery of human life in the light of India's cultural traditions and historical experience. Here we may note as a prophetic sign that Raja Rao has been a keen admirer of that spiritual and philosophical epos of Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*.

K. R. RAMACHANDRAN NAIR

SHAKESPEARE CRITICISM IN THE ROMANTIC AGE

THE sun does not seem to set on Shakespeare. Shakespeare criticism continues to be an international industry. Every nation has its own notion of the bard of Avon, every age its own approach. As T. S. Eliot observes, "Every view of Shakespeare is an imperfect, because a partial, view."¹ Giving an historical-critical account of Shakespeare criticism in the Romantic Age, the present paper claims that the common and popular notion that Coleridge is the only romantic critic worth considering and that Hazlitt, Lamb and De Quincey "do but make a constellation about the primary star of Coleridge"² is erroneous.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there were great critics who admired Shakespeare, but theirs was a qualified tribute. None of them loved Shakespeare as passionately as the Romantic critics. Their main grievance was that Shakespeare wants art, inasmuch as he violates ruthlessly the unities of time, place and action, mingles tragic and comic scenes in the same play with supreme indifference to propriety of feeling, ignores the didactic purpose of art, ruins the diction of his plays by pompous and obscure passages: in short, he flouts all the important rules based upon the practice of the great Greek and Latin playwrights.

Some of these charges were effectively ridiculed and rejected by Johnson himself. With the downfall of the unities Shakespeare criticism in the 19th century shifted its attention from an examination of his plots to a psychological study of his characters and an analysis of his poetry. The Romantic criticism that revolutionized the conception of Shakespeare the playwright came from Germany. Lessing and A. W. Schlegel were the pathfinders. This was acknowledged by Wordsworth himself, who in his "*Essay, Supplementary to the Preface*" (1815), wrote, "The Germans only, of foreign nations, are approaching towards a knowledge and feeling of what he is. In some respects they have acquired a superiority over the fellow-countrymen of the poet: for among us it is a current, I might say, an established opinion, that Shakespeare is justly praised when he is pronounced to be 'a wild irregular genius, in whom great faults are compensated by great beauties.' How long before this misconception passes away, and it becomes universally acknowledged that the judgment of Shakespeare in the selection of his materials, and in the manner in which he has made them, heterogeneous as they often are, constitute a unity of their own, and contribute all to one great end, is not less admirable than his imagination, his invention, and his intuitive knowledge of human nature?"³

It was Maurice Morgann who laid the foundation of romantic criticism of Shakespeare in England. Even if he has failed to prove that Falstaff is not a coward in his essay on the *Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff* (1777), he should be credited with having inaugurated a new era in Shakespeare criticism. This is the reason why Bradley pays the tribute that there is no better piece of

Shakespeare criticism in the world than the essay by Morgann. This great romantic critic was not concerned with the unities; action and plot were to him of no importance. He found the essence of drama in characterization. To him, Falstaff's courage stands upon the ground of natural courage or common sense. He finds constitutional bravery in the composition of Falstaff! "If Morgann did not influence Coleridge, he certainly anticipated the method of his character-studies more fully than any other critic. He treats Shakespeare as a supreme and conscious artist, philosophizes over human nature and aesthetic questions, and analyses the character of Falstaff as if he were not merely a character in a play but also a real human being. This is the method of Coleridge, and it is applied with as much sensitiveness and power as Coleridge could show, except in the very best of his Shakespearean criticism".³ These are the words of J. M. Raysor, one of the staunch admirers of Coleridge.

Some of Coleridge's Shakespeare criticism is derivative. As René Wellek points out, "The distinction between symbol and allegory can be found in Schelling and Goethe, the distinction between genius and talent in Kant, the distinctions between organic and mechanical, classical and modern, statuesque and picturesque in A. W. Schlegel. Coleridge's particular use of the term 'idea' comes from the Germans, and the way in which he links imagination with the process of cognition is also clearly derived from Fichte and Schelling."⁴

Coleridge's Shakespeare lectures draw heavily on Schlegel. He used Schlegel's distinction between the classic drama of Sophocles and the romantic drama of Shakespeare and borrowed also Schlegel's detailed interpretation of Greek tragedy, old comedy and new comedy. He took from him the emphasis on unity of interest instead of unity of action, and the passage on the union of opposites in *Romeo and Juliet*. The leading motif of Schlegel's distinction is Shakespeare's conscious artistry, his being a deep-thinking artist. Schlegel applies the contrast between Gothic and classical architecture to literature in a famous comparison, which is reproduced by Coleridge.

The influence of Schiller is also definite. For his comparative study of Homer and Ariosto as types of the 'naive' and the 'sentimental', he is indebted to Schiller's essay, *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry*.

Coleridge's Shakespeare criticism spreads over a period of twenty-five years, in scattered lectures. Some of it is to be found in the newspaper accounts, some in the notes of Crabbe Robinson and Collier, some in Coleridge's manuscripts and marginalia. Only the material in *Biographia Literaria*—Chapter 15, where there is a critical analysis of *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*—was gone through carefully before it was published.

The fundamental principle of Coleridge's Shakespeare criticism is that his work is coherent and harmonious, and that the material which the great playwright borrowed was subdued to his own high artistic purpose. There is an inner unity in Shakespeare's dramas, and not an outward prefabricated form.

Every play has a central point or significance which gives it its true unity. The structural principle consists in a reconciliation of opposites and a resulting harmony. The play is not to be considered an artefact but an organism with its own inner law of growth and perfection. And Shakespeare is to be looked upon not as a child of nature or an inspired savage but as a great thinker. His judgment is equal to his genius.

Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare delivered in 1811-12 are an attempt to illustrate the principles of 'counteraction' and 'organic growth' in relation to the greatest English dramatist. The poet, in his view, does not create, he becomes. A poem is not created, it grows, like a tree, as if with an inner life of its own. Shakespeare's works are handled as an illustration of the failure of Aristotle's principle of art as an imitation of nature.

The lecture on 'The Tempest' is a comprehensive attack on neo-Aristotelian dramatic criticism, including the three unities, and especially against the French neo-classical critics, such as Voltaire. The ancient dramas required the unities because the fable, language and characters appeal to the reason. Shakespeare's plays, on the other hand, appeal to the imagination—to the reason as contemplating our inward nature, and the inmost working of the passions. Such reason is independent of time and space; its certainties are eternal truths.

A Shakespearean character, according to Coleridge, is not pre-determined but shapes itself according to circumstances and the poet acquires knowledge of how his puppets would react by an act of empathy. Shakespeare transports himself into the very being of each personage. There are two ways of character-creation: by observation and by meditation. The former is an inferior art. All the characters of Shakespeare are born of meditation; they owe only their external qualities to his observation of the actual world of his day.

If Shakespeare has been blamed for his conceits, Coleridge's defence is that a vast number have been unfairly imputed to him. However, a conceit is not necessarily unnatural, when we consider the fashion of Shakespeare's age. To refute the charges of indecency and immorality against Shakespeare, Coleridge wants the reader to make a distinction between manners and morals. Some offences against decency were the ordinary language of the time; and if Shakespeare offended, it was always for the sake of merriment!

The French neo-classicists presuppose that the aim of a drama is perfect delusion. Dr Johnson holds a diametrically opposite view. To him, the spectator is fully aware of the fact that what he is witnessing is not reality. "The truth is, that the spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players. .. Imitations produce pain or pleasure, not because they are mistaken for realities, but because they bring realities to mind." Coleridge avoids the two extremes and points out that there is an intermediate state, like a dream—a negative reality. The stage combines several fine arts in a harmonious whole in order to imitate reality and produce temporary half-faith in the spectator. The true stage-

illusion is not in the mind's judging a certain scene to be a forest, but in its remitting the judgment that it is not a forest.

Coleridge comes to the conclusion that Shakespearean drama is neither tragedy nor comedy but Romantic drama or dramatic romance. And the following characteristics distinguish his plays from those of others: (1) Expectation is aroused rather than surprise. (2) Opposites attract and temper each other. (3) There is no account of innocent adulteries, interesting incests or virtuous vice. (4) The dramatic interest is independent of the plot. Action or plot is not of much importance. The action-plot in every play serves as an occasion or canvas for presenting passion and characters. (5) There is interfusion of the lyrical in and through the dramatic. (6) The characters must be inferred by the reader.

Coleridge is not all admiration for the poems. He praises them for the sweetness of versification and the choice of subjects remote from the private interests and circumstances of the writer. Shakespeare's creative power and intellectual energy are fully reconciled only in his dramas. *Venus and Adonis* does not admit the deeper passions. Though *The Rape of Lucrece* demands their intensest workings, it has neither pathos nor any other dramatic quality. Coleridge has practically nothing to say on the sonnets of Shakespeare. H. C. Robinson records how he struggled to give a lecture on the poems of Shakespeare "He certainly might with a little exertion have collected matter enough for one lecture at least out of the poems of Shakespeare. But he utterly passed over the Sonnets and made no remark on the reception the poems have met with from modern critics."⁶

Coleridge's Shakespeare criticism is desultory and fragmentary. His view of drama minimises some of its essentials. One of them is action; another is the production in the theatre. Coleridge is insensitive and prefers to read his Shakespeare by the fireside. His anxiety to defend the work of art as a tightly organized whole contributed to his Shakespeare idolatry. "When he did not see how he could fit a passage into the presumed ideal whole, he simply declared it to be an interpolation of the actors, as he did with the Porter's speech in *Macbeth* or the wooing of Lady Anne by Richard III."⁷ His remarks on the plays and characters are often disappointing: "either trite and moralizing or, when ingenious, unconvincing. Even some of the more famous dicta, such as that about Iago's 'motive-hunting of motiveless malignity' are misleading. The view that the Pyrrhus' speech in *Hamlet* is not burlesque would find few defenders today. Whatever the merits of these observations, they are not in any way integrated into a theory or even into a unified conception of a play."⁸

As Middleton Murry observes, Coleridge presented Shakespeare as a miracle of universality and forgot his particularity. Shakespeare is pictured as an ideal romantic poet and not as an Elizabethan playwright "Murry is right, of course, and the criticism of the twentieth century has had to recover the Elizabethan particularity Coleridge overlooked or denied"⁹

With regard to his psychological analyses of Shakespeare's characters, it is

to be noted that he confines himself to a limited group of eight plays. The choice of these is a reflection on his typical romantic prejudices. He neglects the Falstaff plays in favour of *Richard II* and this indicates his indifference to Shakespearean humour. He chooses *The Tempest* and *Love's Labour's Lost* to represent the comedies just because of their lyrical quality. His lyrical interests are evident in his choice of tragedies also, after the four great tragedies, he gives an almost undue importance to *Romeo and Juliet*. He does not go beyond these eight plays in his lectures except for occasional illustrations. "Most of the marginalia on other plays are too brief and discontinuous for important character-studies."¹⁰

His historical knowledge is not wide or detailed. And this affects his analysis of *Hamlet*. For instance, he was ignorant of the contemporary literary analogies to Hamlet's refusal to kill the King because he was at prayer and secure from damnation. He is not completely successful in his analysis of *The Tempest*. Not many readers would accept the character of Othello as it is described by Coleridge in his well-known comparative study of Othello and Leontes.

In emendations Coleridge is ingenious but unreliable, for he had little knowledge of Elizabethan idiom. "As a verbal critic Coleridge was an utter failure. His textual emendations and verbal interpretations are a mere child's play compared with those of Capell, Steevens and Malone."¹¹ His defence of puns depends upon philosophical explanations, which do not seem entirely appropriate. Occasionally we come across contradictory statements. "In one place Coleridge describes Shakespeare as indulgent to the mob, in another he says that Shakespeare's only predilection was contempt of mobs".¹²

(To be continued)

P MARUDANAYAGAM

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BIRTH OF THE HIMALAYAS

THE story of the Himalayas began in Gondwanaland, about 100 million years ago.

“Gondwanaland”—the ancient giant continent that once existed where the southern Indian ocean now lies—broke into pieces around that time. Its fragments drifted apart, to form today’s Australia, India, Antarctica, South Africa and South America.

The fragment that was to become India moved rapidly northwards, opening up a large expanse of the Indian Ocean, in a collision course heading straight for the southern flank of the Asian landmass. When it collided, mud and sediments were squeezed up from the ancient sea of Tethys in great ridges and spurs. The Himalayas had been born.

Gondwanaland, Pangaes, Lemuria, the sea of Tethys—the names evoke a misty, fairy-tale atmosphere, like stories of the legendary Atlantis. Yet, the theory of a landmass called Gondwanaland having split apart and partially submerged has a basis in hard, geological fact. The intriguing name of the fabled continent is drawn from that core area of today’s India inhabited by the aboriginal Gonds—an area where 300-million-year-old fossil formations of the coal-forming period now widely exposed, have provided clues to the largely uncommunicative past.

There are scientific doubts about the unaccountable sinking of a huge landmass. But the study of under-sea trenches and deeps has indicated that huge tracts of the ocean floors have in fact vanished down trench fissures into the earth’s core, or slid beneath other continental landmasses as they move. Was there really a Gondwanaland? About seven years ago, geologists working in Antarctica found the fossil of a *Lystrosaurus*, an amphibian that lived over 200 million years ago, it was known to have inhabited parts of Asia and South America. How had it got to a point just 500 kilometres from the South Pole? Geologists excitedly claimed that the former existence of Gondwanaland could no longer be seriously disputed.

Now long afterwards, in 1972, an expedition from the American Scripps Foundation of Oceanography set out to probe the secrets of the “young” Indian ocean. American and Australian scientists aboard the specially equipped deep-sea drilling vessel, the *Glomar Challenger*, described the vast stretch of water as “structurally the most complex of all the world’s oceans.” Their mission: to seek in its floor the trail of India’s migration to the Asian landmass.

They found it. Drilling down the sea-bed for core samples, the expedition looked for clues in the 12-kilometre thick layer of sediment washed down from the supposed collision line of the Himalayas by the Ganga and Brahmaputra, to form the submarine sedimentary apron called the Bengal Fan which stretches out to sea for 1,500 miles. Sailing from Australia to Sri Lanka, the *Glomar*

Challenger drilled eight holes—down to 750 miles into the ocean floor, in water deeper than 6,000 metres. Almost 1,000 miles from the nearest land and more than a mile deep, they discovered a sunken island chain, with lignite coal swamps and shell banks on its crest. This was the 3,000-mile 'Ninety East Ridge' which once cut across the ocean face.

The scientists traced the Himalayan sediments all the way to the deep waters past Sumatra. At the end of their amazing voyage they made their report: "Prior to 100 million years ago, an ancient supercontinent existed in the area. ." The fantastic story of Gondwanaland had been vindicated once again.

The Bengal Fan was not the only proof of the slow return of mineral-rich sediments from the "young" mountains to the ocean. During the "uplift of the Himalayas," said the Glomar scientists, "the Indus river went through this majestic range, and carried large quantities of sediment into the Arabian Sea, south of Karachi." As a result, another huge submarine deposit, the Indus Cone, had gradually accumulated. Sites on the cone were also earmarked for drilling probes.

What of the majestic Himalayas? The Glomar scientists said their probe had shown the way to accurate dating of some of India's restless movements. The deep sea drilling had revealed striations and traces that put the earliest date for the formation of the existing ocean floor at around 80 million years ago. Twenty million years after, India broke off from the Gondwana landmass.

Differences between ages of the oldest sediments at various drill sites provided another date: "India ceased to drift northwards away from Australia 60 million years ago." Before that, India and Australia had been moving away from each other at the geologically rapid rate of six inches a year.

The process of change moved into a cyclic pattern while the new-born Himalayas were still being formed, and as erosion set in the folded ranges, sands and mud began to be drained down to the sea again. Meanwhile, the long, shifting adjustment of the nascent mountains got under way, with earthquakes and subsidence, folding and faulting of the geological strata.

In the flurry caused by the Glomar Challenger expedition report, perhaps no one recalled a little passage penned by an officer of the Geological Survey of India almost a lifetime before. Commenting on the "folding and fold-faulting of the sub-Himalayas" that had gone on "since one to 60 million years ago," C. S. Middlemiss had written in 1905 that the "special function" of tectonic changes in the region had "undoubtedly been to straighten out this mountain foot into a uniform curve—the great southwardly convex curve of the whole Himalayan chain." He found that "areas showing any marked irregularities still left, may well be in a peculiar condition of strain, extremely favourable to geo-tectonic movements, including faults". Middlemiss's paper drew attention to the "striking structural peculiarity of two points of the Himalayan area—the great inbaying of the younger Tertiary formation of the sub-Himalayan towards the

higher central regions of the mountains. The lines of the main boundry fault separating these Tertiaries from the very old Himalayan rocks of the region take a huge sweep inwards and eastwards in the locale of the Kangra earthquake . . .and the return almost in a north-south sweep...the Tertiaries then pursue a normal direction until the Dehra Dun area is reached, when there occurs another but much smaller inbaying towards the central area. Nowhere else is there such exceptional irregularity or unevenness in the disposition of these bordering bands of strata.”

Postulating his theory that the lines were straightening out, he found his view “strengthened by the fact that already on the plainward edge of the sub-Himalayan band, considerable straightening has occurred.” Seven years before the theory of continental drift was expounded, 55 years before the concepts of plate tectonics emerged, Middlemiss was writing about the push of the Indian continental plate against the Eurasian plate.

That pushing movement is still going on. Shoving against the Eurasian plate, the still drifting fragment of Gondwanaland is slowly slipping—at the rate of two centimetres a year—under the larger landmass, geologists say. As the Eurasian plate slowly overlaps the forward push, the Himalayas murmur and move. Till their story is over, they will know no peace.

RAZIA ISMAIL

Courtesy: *The Sunday Standard Magazine*, 9 2.1975

“SHE TRULY LOVED”

A SEA of serenity, none would suspect
That the worm of doubt could torment
This pure petal of spirituality.
Her fine face was haloed by a luminous grace,
Command and humility were manifest in every gesture
In her presence the stricken of the world felt
Care fly, and their griefs melted at her merest touch
A strange flood of joy coursed through their hearts
At a calm word of sage advice from her lips
Alight with adoration, her eyes sparkled brighter
Than the many candles on different altars.
She whose arms had never clasped a lover or a son,
Who had forsaken soft bed and epicurean delight,
Her compassion wafted over all lives like a caress of incense,
Desire she had none but coveted only to be worthy of Him,
Self-abnegation's monument and patience incarnate
This flower of Europe's high nobility had been
The belle of a season, the rage of a year,
But bent on an upward path, on her Godward way
Had conquered earthly temptations, renounced sin and virtue.
Today she stood devoid of peace and detachment,
For yesterday when she had gone to inspect the work
Of the great painter of France invited by the church
To sanctify further by beauty's brush
The sanctum sanctorum, she had stood transfixed
At the sublime transformation wrought by his inspired work.
Then she had advanced with a grateful heart to bless him.
The painter beholding her snow-white and delicate pure hands,
Due to deep veneration didn't want them to be sullied
By a touch of his dust and cobweb-covered head
He also was a noble soul like those
Painters and sculptors of India who gave their lives
To the Lord's adoration, leaving no name for posterity
To remember. Day after day he visited the great cathedrals
To get inspiration and strength for this noble work.
During these months nothing passed his lips except a monk's fare
Yet in modern times when virtue is at a discount
And goodness is taken as the hallmark of the weak,
He hid his gentle saintly character under a masque of worldliness.
Above all he could not bear to be thanked

He forestalled the shower of gratitude by saying—
 “Madam! come not too near this sinner.
 Your robe of virtue will be defaced
 By my million stains and lapses.
 Last night only I lay with a harlot.”

The reverend mother stunned by these alien words
 Stopped, her gentle hands half-raised in blessings.
 Enjoying her discomfiture the painter in innocent mischief
 Mocked her thus further, “Mother Superior,
 Christ took the sins of all men on Himself,
 Can’t His daughter do the same?”
 Though her heart was shocked, the iron discipline held.
 With an outward detachment the Mother said,
 “God bless you my friend.” But her steps were
 A little too hasty and her departure looked like a retreat.

The painter laughed heartily at his own prank
 For he had seen her flesh shrink at his brash admonition
 Ignorant of how sorely he had troubled that gentle soul
 The painter’s brush became more revelatory and vigorous,
 As he painted the last angel in the likeness of the Mother Superior,
 The saintly being whom he secretly adored.

Her vesper prayers done, Aves offered,
 A simple supper disposed of and night’s blessings given to all,
 The Mother retired to her incense-touched room illumed by a single candle.
 This night which her soul told her would be her last,
 For the shadow of the future sometimes falls on our senses,
 She whose life had been purer than the driven snow,
 Who had achieved more than a mortal can ever hope for
 Or God demand, now felt defeated by the painter’s taunt.
 Inwardly she knew that she had felt a repulsion
 At touching the man who had thus loudly proclaimed his sins.

The moment was near for leaving the earthly abode,
 The dawn was waiting to usher her to her heavenly home,
 But she felt some high task remained unfulfilled,
 Something had been left undone.
 She knelt before the icon given to her by the Count, her father,
 A family heirloom of which all Christendom had heard.
 A calm beyond words settled on her,
 And a love from heaven filled her heart,
 As with a beatific smile she rose
 Taking the holy icon from its sanctified niche.

Opening the door with firm steps she went where
 The painter worked tonight to finish his work—
 For the morrow's Feast of Redemption.
 Her faithful servitor Sister Bernadette,
 Dozing on her stool, awoke at the opening of the door,
 And was transfixed by the nimbus around the Mother's face.
 She could have vowed on Holy Bible
 That she saw light linger in the Mother's footsteps.
 Oblivious to her follower the saint glided on
 Her last errand, to her final triumph.
 The painter startled by her presence at that hour
 And by her radiant face of incarnate love
 Involuntarily kneeled. Giving the icon to him the Mother
 Said, "Friend! Here is a present for you."

Thus rising above sin and virtue she sank
 In front of the magnificence which the artist
 Just before she came had unveiled. The church
 Was inexplicably filled with a heavenly scent,
 As all the angels in all the frescoes assumed her likeness.
 And the two present heard a divine voice say,
 "She truly loved."

SHYAM KUMARI

(Courtesy *Sri Aurobindo's Action*, October 1987)

“SATYAVAN MUST DIE”

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

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1991)

12: A Luminous Satyavan

SATYAVAN has breathed his last but Savitri will not allow her clasp around him to relax. She hopes to hold him back by guarding “the oneness they had been”. The God of Death, however, draws her attention to the fact that she should not attempt to keep the spirit within the frame when death has taken place, for, by such a passionate action, she is actually causing great suffering to her dead husband. Savitri recognises this truth and, standing “gathered in lonely strength”, loosens the grip on him. Presently Death, the king, leans down for a very brief while, touches the earth, and quickly stands erect again. He has finished his work by pulling out the soul of Satyavan from his body. Satyavan now, once more in the cycles of evolution, has truly died

And like a dream that wakes out of a dream,
Forsaking the poor mould of that dead clay,
Another luminous Satyavan arose,
Starting upright from the recumbent earth
As if someone over viewless borders stepped
Emerging on the edge of unseen worlds.
In the earth's day the silent marvel stood
Between the mortal woman and the god.
Such seemed he as if one departed came
Wearing the light of a celestial shape
Splendidly alien to the mortal air.¹

Though luminous and in the light of a celestial shape, and with “wonderful eyes”, he could not see anything there and waited for a command. He stood for a short minute, between the two vast powers, Savitri on this side and Death on the other

But now the impulse of the Path was felt
Moving from the Silence that supports the stars
To touch the confines of the visible world
Luminous he moved away; behind him Death
Went slowly with his noiseless tread ..
And Savitri moved behind eternal Death,
Her mortal pace was equalled with the god's ²

The journey through the “weird country” began, proceeding towards the dead end in utter darkness of the Night. As long as Savitri was holding him in her clasp, it was impossible for Death to touch the body of Satyavan and snatch his soul; but then it was Death indeed who revealed the luminous being that Satyavan ever was. The gross physical body, the thick terrestrial robe, had covered it from sight; Death has now removed the veil and disclosed something extraordinary, something that is heavenly subject to his rule. If Death is to be identified with this inconscient material world’s process, then it is he who conceals the lustrous being in his deeper folds and it is by throwing these away that that lustrous being becomes free. The glorious wonder in the mortal body is made bare to us by that strange Agent himself who is the guardian of mortality we are prone to. That mystery of the luminous being, no bigger than the thumb, in the charge of Death, is, truly enough, the luminous clue also, showing the possibility of deathlessness in the domain of Death. Satyavan’s death portends that possibility.

Death has become instrumental in revealing a luminous Satyavan who lay hidden inside the physical sheath. But this luminous Satyavan is not free and must go to the World of Darkness and suffer there. Although a Veda-knower and “a sapphire cutting” from heaven and a being so rare, of so divine a make, he could not ascend to the World of the Immortals where Death has no sway. Was his spiritual attainment inadequate for such a lofty claim or destination? Rishi after Rishi had crossed the mortal world and stepped into the solar regions, why did not Satyavan then?

Rishi Sharabhanga had Indra’s offer to take him to the World of Brahma, after his casting away the earthly body, after his shuffling off the mortal coil, but he knew that Sri Rama was there around in the forest and would be visiting him soon. He had therefore postponed his departure till his arrival. After meeting him and showing him the way to the hermitage of Rishi Sutikshna of fiery splendour, Sharabhanga prepared himself to leave the body. He kindled a bright fire and to it gave rich oblations, with accompaniment of Vedic chants, and entered into it. The fire consumed all his mortal parts and purified him; then from its golden leaping flames arose another Sharabhanga, lustrous and beautiful like a youth. He crossed the worlds of the fire-worshipper, and even of the gods, and ascended to Brahmaloaka

ततोऽग्निं स समाधाय हुत्वा चाज्येन मन्त्रवत् ।
 शरभङ्गो महातेजाः प्राविवेश हुताशनम् ॥
 तस्य रोमाणि केशाश्च तदा वह्निर्महात्मनः ।
 जीर्णां त्वचं तदस्थीनि यच्च मांसं च शोणितम् ॥
 स च पावकसंकाशः कुमारः समपद्यत ।
 उत्थायाग्निचयात् तस्माच्छरभङ्गो व्यरोचत ॥
 स लोकानाहिताग्नीनामृषीणा च महात्मनाम् ।
 देवाना च व्यतिक्रम्य ब्रह्मलोकं व्यरोहत ॥¹

His arduous tapasya, and his relinquishing the body in the presence of the Avatar, had taken him to the most blessed Heaven. Even the simple-souled Shabari, after receiving and serving the Avatar, had risen to the highest World when she had leaped into the bright fire. To the Rishis of the holy Matangavana she had offered all her devotion and had served them with such pure intent of heart that it had become for her the Yoga of Meditation “Adorned with celestial jewels and celestial garlands, daubed with heavenly sandal-paste and clad in heavenly raiment”, she looked beautiful like a streak of lightning in the clouds. She joined the Rishis she had served.

Surely the sages of the Shalwa Woods—where Satyavan grew up from his childhood and where under them he learned the sacred lores—must also have ascended to that Heaven of Beatitude. Rishi Gautama, for instance, had accumulated great might of askesis, observed strictest celibacy from his early youth, pleased well the Fire-God, followed meticulously the fasting rites by drinking only the air, full of light as his name denoted, must have passed on to the solar worlds after withdrawing from this existence. But young Satyavan, in whose human face Savitri saw the Eternal, must die after living just for one quarter of the life-span of a fulfilled Aryan. Was it his fault that he had fallen in love with the Princess of Madra who was born on the *amavasyā* day and that in their marriage, which also took place on the *amavasyā* day, they could live together only for twelve months? Is it not strange and baffling, even anachronistic, that one who had great spiritual experiences, who had “caught the echoes of a word supreme” and “listened through music for the eternal Voice”, even glimpsed the “presence of the One in all”, should have been meted with such a fate? Now this Satyavan must die and must depart to the Abode of the Dead where rules the kingly Nihil of the Absolute.

Why was it destined that Satyavan should die at an early age? He has hardly begun his house-hold life; the five great sacrifices have yet to be performed; the debt of ancestors to be paid; he has yet to conquer the earth by his manly valour, *puruṣārtha*, gain all the worldly riches and beget children for the continuance of the ancestral line. Instead, what we see is a spectacle of death, a wasteland of life stretching to a dark infinity. In the “fore-bemoaned woes, that had been and can be again”—as Shakespeare bewailed—young Satyavan dies once more. Again another luminous Satyavan arises from the new corpse. A glorious Satyavan emerges from the body of Satyavan now lying in the lap of Mother Earth. Yama sets him on the path reaching the dark South; but Savitri follows Yama. The great trio—Satyavan-Yama-Savitri in that sequence—moves through the dim suffocating spaces where Time and all creation must cease to be. It is in the very kingdom of Death, in that most horrendous Void, the fiercest battle is to be fought. The issue is the soul of Satyavan, the soul of Love. By tapasya, in the manner of the great Rishis, he could have bypassed death and reached the worlds of the most blessed. A glorious Satyavan could have arisen from the pyre. He could have gone through the gate of the Sun, *sūryadvāra*, and lived in the

undecaying and imperishable Self He could have by the dissolution of the Birth crossed beyond death and by the Birth enjoyed Immortality.

विनाशेन मृत्युं तीर्त्वा सम्भूत्याऽमृतमश्नुते ।⁴

But then there would not have been death there. Satyavan must die to see Death Of course, he must die in the lap of Savitri where all safety is. What a blessing to be in her lap! Crossing not the gate of the Sun but the worlds of Death, Satyavan has reached the Abode of the Divine Mother herself.

In the brief but revelatory phrase of Eliot, occultly-packed and too great or fine to be in *Little Gidding*, the luminous Satyavan has become a “symbol perfected in death”. Perfected in death and not by death—that is indeed the mystery and meaning of this divine Incarnation in the material world. Satyavan is this Avatar of Love in Death

If we are to see the death of Satyavan in the light of the Gita, then it becomes clear that it was not a Yogin’s withdrawal from the earthly existence, leading him to the attainment of the highest status Talking of the divine Being and the process by which he is reached, the Gita says:

This supreme Self is the Seer, the Ancient of Days, subtler than the subtle and the Master and Ruler of all existence who sets in their place in his being all things that are, his form is unthinkable, he is refulgent as the sun beyond the darkness; he who thinketh upon this Purusha in the time of departure, with the motionless mind, a soul armed with the strength of Yoga, a union with God in bhakti and the life-force entirely drawn up and set between the brows in the seat of mystic vision, he attains to this supreme divine Purusha This supreme Soul is the immutable self-existent Brahman of whom the Veda-knowers speak, and this is that into which the doers of askesis enter when they have passed beyond the affections of the mind of mortality and for the desire of which they practise the control of the bodily passions; that status I will declare to thee with brevity. All the doors of the senses closed, the mind shut into the heart, the life-force taken up out of its diffused movement into the head, the intelligence concentrated in the utterance of the sacred syllable OM and its conceptive thought in the remembrance of the supreme Godhead, he who goes forth, abandoning the body, he attains to the highest status⁵

Finally, the Gita assures us that the great souls that have reached the supreme divine Purusha return not to birth, “to this transient and painful condition” of mortal beings. Satyavan’s death was not in any way of that Yogic kind—it was not meant to be so. In that process Death would have remained intact, leaving this mortality’s transient and painful condition unchanged. This divine Incarna-

tion does not follow the path of the conventional Yogins. Satyavan must die in the evolutionary being's way and meet Death to attain perfection in death.

And the interesting point is that Death is not concerned about the mortal members of Satyavan; his concern is the luminous self that survives in death. It is indeed only that which can get perfected in it. Mortality cannot bear the touch of Death and has to be abandoned when the luminous being has to proceed towards the eternal Night. Savitri, when she started following Yama, had to shed off her mortal sheaths to enter into the kingdom of Death, to keep pace equal with the God's. One thing is quite certain: whether it be the worlds of Death or the Heavens of Beatitude, no mortal element can be expected to attain these states. Mortality remains ever behind in the earthly bounds; it is the soul who crosses to the other realms either to suffer or to live in the God-delights of Paradise.

(To be continued)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

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| 3 <i>Ramayana Aranyakanda</i> , Canto 5 | |

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1991)

Sri Aurobindo's Life in Cambridge (1890-1893)

AFTER obtaining a scholarship for classics to King's College Sri Aurobindo spent three years in Cambridge. He did not spend his time only on classical studies; his life in Cambridge was concerned with four major activities: (1) studies for the Tripos, (2) I.C.S. probationership, (3) participation in the Indian Majlis and (4) writing poetry.

“He did not graduate at Cambridge. He passed high in the First Part of the Tripos (First class); it is on passing this First Part that the degree of B.A. is usually given, but as he had only two years at his disposal, he had to pass it in his second year at Cambridge; and the First Part gives the degree only if it is taken in the third year; if one takes it in the second year one has to appear for the Second Part of the Tripos in the fourth year to qualify for the degree. He might have got the degree if he had made an application for it, but he did not care to do so. A degree in English is valuable only if one wants to take up an academical career.”¹

Dr. K. D. Ghose was very happy to see the progress of Sri Aurobindo. His appreciation of his son's success was expressed in a letter dated 2nd December 1891, to Jogendra Bose, his brother-in-law. “The three sons I have produced, I have made giants of them. I may not, but you will live to be proud of the three nephews who will adorn your country and shed lustre to your name. Benoy [Benoy Bhushan] will be like his ‘father’ in every line of action—self-sacrificing, but limited in his sphere of action. Mano [Manomohan] will combine the feelings of his father, the grand ambitions of a cosmopolitan spirit that hate and abhor angle and corner feelings, with the poetry of his grandfather, Rajnarain Bose. Ara [Arabinda], I hope, will yet glorify his country by brilliant administration... He is at King's College, Cambridge, now, borne there by his own ability.”²

Sri Aurobindo did well both in classical studies and in I.C.S. probationership. There were scanty evidences about his achievements in Cambridge. But the authentic reports of Mr. Prothero and of K. D. Ghose are supported by a letter to his father from Aurobindo himself in which he refers to “the great O.B.”, otherwise Oscar Browning, who is the feature par excellence of King's. He was extremely flattering, passing from the subject of cotillions to that of scholarship he said to me, ‘I suppose you know you passed an extraordinarily high examination. I have examined papers at thirteen examinations and I have never during that time seen such excellent papers as yours’ (meaning my classical papers, at the scholarship examination) ‘As, for your essay, it is wonderful.’ In this essay (a comparison between Shakespeare and Milton), I indulged my oriental tastes to the top of their bent; it overflowed with rich and tropical

imagery, it abounded in antitheses and epigrams and it expressed my real feelings without restraint or reservation. I thought myself that it was the best thing I had ever done, but at school it would have been condemned as extraordinarily Asiatic and bombastic. The great O B afterwards asked me where my rooms were and when I had answered he said, 'that wretched hole!' (and) then turning to Mahaffy, 'How rude we are to our scholars! We get great minds to come down here and then shut them up in that box I suppose it is to keep their pride down.' ”

During his stay at Cambridge Sri Aurobindo continued to read, write, and love poetry very much. He made a habit to live in it.

About his interest in poetry Mr. A. B. Purani has given two extracts from letters of two contemporaries of Sri Aurobindo in Cambridge. One was an undergraduate with Aurobindo at King's College during 1890-91. He said: "I knew him as a brilliant young classical scholar, an open Entrance Scholar of the College, of marked literary and poetic taste, and as far as I ever saw a young man of high character and modest bearing, who was liked by all who knew him".⁴ The other letter refers to Sri Aurobindo's lack of interest in games and his general attitude towards the life of England "His interests were in literature: among Greek poets for instance he once waxed enthusiastic over Sappho, and he had a nice feeling of English style. Yet for England itself he seemed to have small affection; it was not only the climate that he found trying: as an example, he became quite indignant when on one occasion I called England the modern Athens. This title, he declared, belonged to France. England much more resembled Corinth, a commercial state, and therefore unattractive to him."⁵

Several poems were written by Sri Aurobindo between the age of eighteen and twenty. Most of them were published later at Baroda in 1895 under the title, *Songs to Myrtilla*. These early verses in many places give the reader a brilliant forecast of the future. K. D. Sethna writes, "No one with an ear for sound-values, an eye for apt images and a little ability to look below the surface can fail to observe that his juvenilia held just the right promise ... And who can deny either music or imaginative subtlety to Sri Aurobindo when in his *Songs to Myrtilla*, written largely in his late teens under the influence of a close contact with the Greek Muse, he gives us piece after finely-wrought piece of natural magic?"⁶ In Cambridge when the Irish leader Parnell died in 1891 Sri Aurobindo wrote a deeply felt poem on him.

A. B. Purani reports: "It was Norman Ferrers, who later practised as a barrister in the Straits Settlement, who gave to Aurobindo, while at Cambridge, the clue to the discovery of the true quantitative hexameter in English. He was reading out a very Homeric line from Clough and his recitation of it gave Aurobindo the real swing (or lilt) of the metre. Norman Ferrers passed through Calcutta on his way to Singapore in 1908 when the political prosecution against Sri Aurobindo (Alipore Bomb Case) was going on. He went to the High Court and

was anxious to render help to Sri Aurobindo, but did not know how to do it.”⁷

During this period Sri Aurobindo began to take interest in Indian politics. His father, though an anglophile, was revolted by the repressive rule of the British Government in India. He began sending “*The Bengali* newspaper with passages marked relating cases of maltreatment of Indians by Englishmen and he wrote in his letters denouncing the British Government in India as a heartless Government.”⁸ Inwardly Sri Aurobindo had already received an impression that he would have to play a great part in the revolutionary movement in India and the world. Soon after he came to London he, along with his brothers, joined a secret society romantically called the “*Lotus and Dagger*”, “. in which each member vowed to work for the liberation of India generally and to take some special work in furtherance of that end. But the society was still-born This happened immediately before his return to India and when he had finally left Cambridge. Indian politics at that time was very timid and moderate”⁹ The Indian students, including Sri Aurobindo, rebelled against this mendicancy and moderatism of political leaders of India

It was during his stay in Cambridge that he associated with the Indian Majlis which was started by the Indian students “But the firm decision” for the liberation of his country had already been made when he went to Cambridge. “...as a member and for some time secretary of the Indian Majlis at Cambridge he delivered many revolutionary speeches which, as he afterwards learnt, had their part in determining the authorities to exclude him from the Indian Civil Service; the failure in the riding test was only the occasion, for in some other cases an opportunity was given for remedying this defect in India itself ”¹⁰

“Sri Aurobindo’s first turn towards spiritual seeking came in England in the last year of his stay there. He had lived in the family of a Non-Conformist clergyman, minister of a chapel belonging to the ‘congregational denomination’ though he never became a christian, this was the only religion and the Bible the only Scripture with which he was acquainted in his childhood, but in the forms in which it presented itself to him, it repelled rather than attracted him and the hideous story of persecution, staining medieval Christianity and the narrowness and intolerance even of its later developments disgusted him so strongly that he drew back from religion altogether. After a short period of complete atheism, he accepted the Agnostic attitude. In his studies for the I C S., however, he came across a brief and very scanty and bare statement of the ‘Six philosophies’ of India and he was especially struck by the concept of the Atman in the Advaita. It was borne in upon his mind that here might be a true clue to the reality behind life and the world. He made a strong and very crude mental attempt to realise what this self or Atman might be, to convert the abstract idea into a concrete and living reality in his own consciousness but conceiving it as something beyond or behind this material world; not having understood it as something immanent in himself and all and also universal.”¹¹

Sri Aurobindo passed his Tripos (Part 1) and I.C.S. Examination on 4th November 1892. But he wanted to escape from the I.C.S. as he later told his disciples at Pondicherry; it was simply to fulfil his father's wish that he had studied for it. His growing nationalistic feeling made him averse to it. He neglected his lessons in riding and failed in the last riding test. He was, as is often done, given another chance to pass, but avoided presenting himself in time for the test. He was on this pretext disqualified for the service. He felt no call for the I.C.S. and was questing for a way to free himself from the bondage. The following questions and answers cast further light on Sri Aurobindo's I.C.S. rejection.

Question. "You did not appear in the riding test in your I.C.S.?"

Sri Aurobindo: "No. They gave me another chance, but I again did not appear and finally they rejected me."

Question. "But then why did you appear for the I.C.S.? Was it by some intuition that you did not take the riding test?"

Sri Aurobindo. "Not at all. I knew nothing about the Yoga at that time. I appeared for the I.C.S. because my father wanted it and I was too young to understand. Later, I found out what sort of work it is and I had disgust for an administrator's life and I had no interest in administrative work. My interest was in poetry and literature and study of languages and patriotic action."¹²

The problem of Sri Aurobindo's career was solved by James Cotton. The Maharaja of Baroda, Sayajirao Gaekwar, was then in London. So James Cotton negotiated with him for the job for Sri Aurobindo in Baroda state. In an Evening Talk Sri Aurobindo said:

"It is strange how things arrange themselves at times, for example I failed in the I.C.S. and was looking for a job exactly when the Gaekwar happened to be in London. I don't know whether he called us or we met him but an elderly gentleman whom we consulted was quite willing to propose Rs. 200 per month, that is, he thought £ 10 was a good enough sum, and the Gaekwar went about telling people that he had got a civilian for Rs. 200. It is surprising the authority was quite satisfied with Rs. 200 per month. But I left the negotiation to my eldest brother and James Cotton, I knew nothing about life at that time."¹³

To renounce such an attractive prospect as the Indian Civil Service must be regarded as an uncommon sacrifice by many, but to Sri Aurobindo it was a great relief. His heart and soul panted for the breath of his Motherland. He spent fourteen years in England—long years of budding life, devoted to intensive study and careful observation. He had deeply studied the classical thought and was engrossed in the grandeur of Greek epics. He was charmed by the splendour and beauty of English poetry. He loved the grace and style of French literature, the sublimity of Dante's creation, and the giant sweep of Goethe's mind. He was impressed by the intrepid spirit of adventure and inquiry which characterised the scientific research of his times. But the cruelty and oppression which he saw in

the name of civilisation and the heartless exploitation of man by man filled him with "strong hatred and disgust". He had formed no ties in England. "Few friendships were made in England and none very intimate; the mental atmosphere was not found congenial."¹⁴ He wrote to one of the disciples later.

"There was an attachment to English and European thought and literature, but not to England as a country;... If there was attachment to a European land as a second country, it was intellectually and emotionally to one not seen or lived in in this life, not England, but France."¹⁵ Sri Aurobindo left England on 12th January 1893, by S. S. Carthage.

Dr. Ghose was particularly fond of Sri Aurobindo. So he was eagerly waiting for his dear son to come back to India. He went to Bombay in order to receive his son. But he could not get correct information about the ship in which Sri Aurobindo was coming. So he came back. He was informed by Messers. Grindlay & Co. that the ship Roumania, in which Sri Aurobindo was coming from England, had sunk off the coast of Portugal. There were hardly any survivors. This wrong information struck his father a fatal blow. He was too weak to bear it. He is reported to have died with his son's name on his lips. Sri Aurobindo arrived at Bombay on February 6, 1893 by the S. S. Carthage.

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

Big Bang's Last Bang (?)

THE cosmological theory of the Big Bang has been discussed in several issues of this journal, more recently with special reference to Stephen Hawking's international bestseller *A Brief History of Time* (Bantam Books, 1988). In this work Hawking seemed to distance himself from the well-known theory which he himself had once helped to create along with Roger Penrose

A research paper published in the science magazine *Nature* suggests that the last days of the Big Bang may have come now. The British astrophysicist Will Saunders of Oxford University had grouped with nine British and Canadian colleagues to analyze an incredible mass of data transmitted to earth in 1983 from an Infrared Astronomy Satellite which had measured a total of 15,000 galaxies with its sensors. The team selected at random 2163 out of them and determined their positions through very complicated procedures. This allowed them eventually to simulate a kind of cosmic globe, which turned out to have gigantic conglomerations of milky ways such as the "Great Wall".

The scientists were shocked when they saw the result of their work. It had formerly been assumed that the stars of an individual galaxy were kept together by so-called Cold Dark Matter (CDM) which is conceived to be invisible matter that cannot be traced by instruments. This CDM-theory had been created because the mass of the visible matter and its gravitation are in themselves quite insufficient to hold the stars. But the theory has been altogether shattered now by the group around Saunders. First of all, the CDM-model may explain the existence of an individual galaxy as such, but not gigantic superstructures of several milky ways. Their agglomeration is simply not covered by the model of invisible dark matter. And secondly, in complete defiance of the Big Bang theory the "Great Wall" stretches over a distance of no less than 500 million light years. Experts say that a Big Bang universe, estimated to have originated about 12 billion years ago, would be by far too young to create such hyperstructures.

The Big Bang advocates had already received a severe blow by the end of 1990, when data from the satellite "Cobe" had refuted the so-called echo model. Cosmic radiation, invading the earth from all directions, had been interpreted by them as an echo of the initial big explosion. But the data from the satellite, indicating a very uniform background radiation, clearly showed that this interpretation was wrong. There were no traces at all of any supposed proto-galaxies of the Big Bang model.

As for the CDM-theory, the US-astrophysicist Alan Dressler commented that "it was too beautiful to be true." In fact, after having noted the new cosmological data, scientists are joking now that nothing speaks against the Big Bang model—except the existence of galaxies (Source. *Der Spiegel* 21-1-1991)

QUEEN CHENNAMMA

A TRUE STORY

A WOMAN is generally said to be strengthless, resourceless and restless. But there are instances of women who were in possession of unusual strength and power which surprised men by their emergence at the hour when occasion called for them. One such woman was Queen Chennamma. She was born in the 18th century in India and sowed the seeds of Indian Independence. The Sepoy Mutiny, which took place 28 years after her death, shook the very foundation of the East India Company.

There is a small state called Kittur near Belgaum. Mallasarja was the king of that state. He was a gallant fighter as well as a hunter. He was a lover of music too. He was dearer to his subjects than their life.

One day the king heard screams of distress outside his palace. The people were crying: "O king, save us. O king, save us." They were panic-stricken. They had come from certain villages to be relieved of their distress. A fierce man-eating tiger was creating havoc in their area. It went about killing men, goats, sheep and cows one after another in their villages, and they were greatly afraid of it.

King Mallasarja consoled them saying: "My dear subjects, go and live in peace and don't be afraid. I am going to the forest today to kill that cruel beast."

The crowd went away crying, "Victory to the king. Victory to the king." The king marched to the forest with his troops to kill that ferocious tiger.

They searched here and there, but nowhere found the animal. After the sun had gone down, the king, all on a sudden, saw the tiger hiding in a large bush. He aimed his gun at it and fired a shot. He thought the tiger was killed.

When he went near it, he found that his shot had missed its mark, but the beast had fallen dead there pierced by an arrow. "Who has killed the tiger in this lonely forest?" he asked in wonder.

As he stood there amazed he saw the figure of a woman at a distance. Going towards her he asked, "Are you a woman or a goddess? Come near me. You seem to be very brave."

Immediately a young girl stood in front of the king. She carried a bow and a quiver on her shoulders. Her face was brilliant. Her dress betrayed her to be a princess. The king said in admiration, "Your courage makes me bow down before you. Tell me who you really are."

The girl replied, "My name is Chennamma. I am the daughter of Dhulap Goud Desai, the king of Kakati."

King Mallasarja took leave of Chennamma and returned to his palace. Chennamma's brilliance had taken possession of his eyes and the memory of her would never leave him at rest. At last he sent a messenger to Chennamma's

father asking for her hand. How could Chennamma's father reject such a nice proposal? He at once agreed to give his daughter in marriage to king Mallasarja and the marriage was performed with great eclat.

Mallasarja had an elder queen named Rudramma. Chennamma had great respect for Rudramma. Rudramma looked upon Chennamma as her younger sister. But, as ill luck would have it, the king was attacked by a fatal disease. After his death Rudramma's son Shivalinga Rudrasarja mounted the throne. He loved both his mother and step-mother deeply. As Rudrasarja had no son, he adopted a boy called Shivalingappa. But the stars of the kingdom of Kittur were not in its favour. King Rudrasarja too fell seriously ill and had a premature death. Now Shivalingappa was the legal heir and successor to the throne of Kittur. But the English collector of Dharwar, Mr. Thackerey, refused to recognise him as such.

Mr. Thackerey had long wished to bring Kittur under the British rule and in no time he surrounded the fort of Kittur with a large number of soldiers. The people and the army of Kittur were now in great danger. Only a short while ago they had lost their king and the throne of Kittur was empty. The English collector ordered the gates of the fort to be opened quickly or else, he threatened, the result would be disastrous.

While the courtiers were discussing the situation among themselves, Queen Chennamma sprang to her feet and addressed them, "My dear subjects, to free our motherland is our highest duty. She has given us birth. We have been brought up in her lap. As long as there is breath in our bodies we shall fight the enemies to rescue her from their clutches."

The cloud of despair that had overshadowed the minds of the soldiers soon dispersed with the encouraging words of Queen Chennamma and the spirit of heroism awakened in their hearts again.

Queen Chennamma donned the dress of a soldier and set out for the battlefield. The small army of Kittur followed her. Their cries of victory rent the sky. They fell upon the English troops like a lion on its prey. A terrible fight raged between the two armies. The queen herself was in command of her army. Thackerey fell dead on the battlefield. Seeing this the Kittur army fought with double vigour and courage. Many English soldiers died and some of them were taken prisoner. Thus the English army met with defeat in this first battle.

Some soldiers had fled from the battlefield after Thackerey's death. They apprised the General of Thackerey's death and of the situation arising thereafter. He was requested to send more soldiers, arms and ammunition to Kittur as soon as possible.

In the second battle that followed, the command of the English army was taken up by Commissioner Chaplin. He besieged Kittur with a stronger army and with a greater quantity of arms and ammunition. Queen Chennamma was aware of this second attack beforehand. But she never wavered: she had full trust in her army.

The English army felt that unless the strength of the Kittur army and their stores inside the fort were known, it would be difficult to overcome them. So they tempted with wealth three men of the opposite camp to come over to their side. Those three men were Konar, Malappa and Venkatarao, who gave the information about the secret door of the fort as well as its men and materials.

Having gained the information, the English soldiers with the help of some spies blasted the arsenal of Kittur in the evening. Some of the men inside the fort lost their lives due to the explosion and others were greatly terrified. Just then some traitors opened the main gate of the fort through which the English soldiers rushed in. The soldiers of Kittur fought to the death. They could not stand against the novel and powerful weapons of their enemies.

On December 5, 1824 the English occupied the Kittur fort. Queen Chennamma was imprisoned. Four years later she breathed her last inside the prison.

Queen Chennamma is no more in her human body. But she has become immortal in the history of India due to her sacrifice for the motherland.

GUNANANDA DAS

(Translated by Gourmohan Mahanta from the Oriya)

MY HUMBLE HUT

I LAMENTED long the poverty of my hut
And tried diverse remedies in vain
But on a sudden the gift of your Gaze
Flooded it with a resplendent Light
And the warmth of a benign smile dried up the tears.

I know not when I sought your Grace,
Nor do I know if I have found you.
But since then I hear your quiet steps
And the friendly call of a melody.

It rings in the vast blue of the sky
And the turbulent waves of the sea!
It vibrates in the mystic twilight
And the sombre bosom of the sleeping night...

It breathes in the purple hue of the dawn
And echoes against the snow-clad peaks,
It beckons from the beloved faces
And the lucid heart of budding peace..

But alas! the vicious serpent dances still
In the dark cavern of the terrestrial abode.
O who will convert the dross to gold
With what magic lore of a flute?

O Master Player, play, play on
Into the depth of subterranean alleys
Till the gold bud blooms on the stalk of desire
And adorns the branches of obscure earth-life.

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The Quest for Music Divine: by *Suresh Chandra Dey*; Ashish Publication House, 8/81 Punjabi Bagh, New Delhi. 1990, pp. 307. Rs. 250/-

THIS book is indeed the quest of a music-lover, a yoga novice and an administrator, a search for the loftiest achievement music can look for. It is the quest of a river for the sea and I discern three streams: 1. music as sound, "nada"; 2. Yoga philosophy expounded in the words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and the author's own interpretations; and 3. Indian classical music, mainly vocal and devotional, its content, evolution, tradition, and its basic approach. These streams are sometimes distinct, often intermixed, sometimes clear, sometimes turbid. The clearest, probably because already well-structured and more familiar to the reviewer, is the third stream. Interlaced are principles of aesthetics, differences and similarities in different Indian and Western music systems, and some refreshing quotes and anecdotes. More than 200 authors have been cited in the Bibliography of this book, based as it is on the author's Doctoral Thesis titled: "Integration of Yoga Systems and Musical Patterns towards Realisation of Nada Brahman"—quite a task.

The book starts with an appreciative foreword by Madhav Pandit and a series of fine sketches of music-stalwarts, saint-musicians and sculpture-depictions. The first chapter on "Nada Brahman" deals with a rather abstruse subject and needs some perseverance on the part of the reader, well-justified by what he learns of the philosophy behind sound and form, the basis of the practice of sound—including mantra, japa and music—as sadhana and its methodology. The text does appear to meander a bit till we find on page 76 Nada-Brahman defined and in the following four pages the detailed method of Nada-Sadhana, a veritable treasure. This is followed by an interesting exposition of the method to be followed by a practitioner of Indian classical music by which an integration can be attempted of Nada-yoga with Hatha, Mantra, Dhyana and Bhakti systems of Yoga. This is the central part of the book.

Thereafter we have a fairly detailed discussion of Indian devotional music and its various regional facets including the work of pioneers like Tagore. Development and evolution of Indian music is discussed later, on the basis of the works of Swami Prajnananda, Holroyde, Ghose and others. The sixth chapter contains illuminating information regarding "ragas", their origin and relationship with seasons and folk music from different parts of India and the enrichment of Indian music by Persian, Arabic and Sufi influences. There is also an excellent exposition of how the North Indian and Karnatic systems of Indian music are a single soul with two bodies. The last Chapter, titled descriptively and optimistically "Future music towards integral-harmony-Divine", details the wide diversity in approach yet the increasing understanding, developing interrela-

tionship and mutual enrichment of the Indian and Western music systems.

Amongst the many interesting quotes and anecdotes is the reported mention of Yehudi Menuhin conducting an orchestra by his legs while he performed 'shirsasana' on the stage. Romain Rolland, commenting on the Indian judgement of Westerners' response to Indian music, apparently told Dilip K. Roy that the Indians judge by the response of "English and Americans who are two of the least musical races on earth. Their music is all but non-existent. When, however, you will contact the musically cultivated of, say, France or Germany (to say nothing of Russia) you shall see how responsive they can be to the beauty of your songs." The quote is delightful but dated, as shown by Americans like John Higgins beautifully practising Indian classical music and giving public performances and the success of schools of Ali Akbar Khan, Ravi Shankar and others in Canada and U.S.A. Today, at least for cultural aspects the world is indeed becoming a smaller place though not yet a big village. Music performances and exhibitions of visual art from widely differing cultures have an increasingly large and appreciative audience all over the world today. Hence this book is a 'must' for libraries not only in India but also abroad and a good buy for those who can afford the price.

DINKAR PALANDE

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Sixty-ninth Seminar

17 February 1991

HOW TO FOLLOW THE MOTHER'S SUNLIT PATH TO THE DIVINE LIFE?

Introductory Speech by Kishor Gandhi

WE have organised this Seminar to celebrate the Mother's 113th birth anniversary which falls on 21 February 1991.

The subject we have chosen for deliberation at this Seminar—"How to follow the Mother's Sunlit Path to the Divine Life?"—is most appropriate to the occasion of her birth anniversary because it is related to the purpose for which she took birth in a human body and which therefore was always the central mission of her life and work.

That purpose and mission, as we all know, was to create the Divine Life upon earth by manifesting the supramental Truth and totally transforming human life by the supramental Power. The discipline or the path which she laid down for realising this aim, jointly with Sri Aurobindo, is the path of Integral Yoga.

All through the ages, those who have followed the spiritual path in India and elsewhere have unanimously declared that it is a very difficult endeavour—*durgam pathastāt*, as we say in India. It has been compared to the razor's edge or the Slough of Despond or the dry desert. Sri Aurobindo himself describes it as "The valley of the shadow of death for the seeker after perfection; ...a dreadful passage full of trials, sufferings, sorrows, obscurations, stumblings, errors, pitfalls"¹ But the path of Integral Yoga which has to be followed for realising the Divine Life is much more difficult than any other path of yoga and often even dangerous. And yet Sri Aurobindo repeatedly says that it need not be so and that it can become a sunlit path, i.e., luminous, joyous, safe, straight and easy.

It may be asked: How can this happen?

The answer, provided by Sri Aurobindo himself, is that though the process of integral transformation is itself extremely difficult and dangerous, it has been *made* safe and easy by the Mother for those who wish to follow her. And he has

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Cent Ed., Vol 20), p 208

also said that it was not at all an easy thing for her to do. In fact, she had to undergo tremendous and prolonged suffering before she could do it. Sri Aurobindo has explained this at more than one place in his writings, both in prose and poetry. I will read here a few extracts by way of examples. Before I read, I must draw your attention to the fact that what I read applies equally both to the Mother and to Sri Aurobindo because the preparation of the path of integral transformation is, as I said, a joint work for which they had to work together.

Here is a passage from one of his letters in which he speaks both for the Mother and for himself:

“As for the Mother and myself, we have had to try all ways, follow all methods, to surmount mountains of difficulties, a far heavier burden to bear than you or anybody else in the Ashram or outside, far more difficult conditions, battles to fight, wounds to endure, ways to cleave through impenetrable morass and desert and forest, hostile masses to conquer—a work such as, I am certain, none else had to do before us. For the Leader of the Way in a work like ours has not only to bring down and represent and embody the Divine, but to represent too the ascending element in humanity and to bear the burden of humanity to the full and experience, not in a mere play or Lila but in grim earnest, all the obstruction, difficulty, opposition, baffled and hampered and only slowly victorious labour which are possible on the Path. But it is not necessary nor tolerable that all that should be repeated over again to the full in the experience of others. It is because we have the complete experience that we can show a straighter and easier road to others—if they will only consent to take it. It is because of our experience won at a tremendous price that we can urge upon you and others, ‘Take the psychic attitude; follow the straight sunlit path, with the Divine openly or secretly upbearing you—if secretly, yet he will show himself in good time,—do not insist on the hard, hampered, roundabout and difficult journey.’ ”¹

There is another letter in which he makes the same point. I read it here:

“It is not because I have myself trod the sunlit way or flinched from difficulty and suffering and danger. I have had my full share of these things and Mother has had ten times her full share. But that was because the finders of the Way had to face these things in order to conquer... But we have never consented to admit their inevitability for others. It is, in fact, to ensure an easier path to others hereafter that we have borne that burden. It was with that object that the Mother once prayed to the Divine that whatever difficulties, dangers, sufferings

¹ *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 24), p 1362

were necessary for the path might be laid on her rather than on others. It has been so far granted her as a result of daily and terrible struggles for years that those who put an entire and sincere trust in her are able to follow the sunlit path and even those who cannot, yet when they do put the trust find their path suddenly easy... The sunlit path is not altogether a fable.”¹

And talking about *Savitri* to a young sadhak, the Mother also spoke in similar words which I quote here:

“All this is his own experience, and what is most surprising is that it is my experience also.. He experienced all these as one experiences joy or sorrow, physically. He walked in the darkness of inconscience, even in the neighbourhood of death, endured the sufferings of perdition, and emerged from the mud, the world-misery to breathe the sovereign plenitude and enter the supreme Ananda. He crossed all these realms, went through the consequences, suffered and endured physically what one cannot imagine. Nobody till today has suffered like Him. He accepted suffering to transform suffering into the joy of union with the Supreme. It is something unique and incomparable in the history of the world. It is something that has never happened before, He is the first to have traced the path in the Unknown, so that we may be able to walk with certitude towards the Supermind: He has made the work easy for us.”²

In Canto Two titled, “The Way of Fate and the Problem of Pain”, in Book Six of *Savitri* there are poignant passages describing in most vivid terms the most excruciating and unimaginable tortures which the “World-Saviour” has to undergo in order to prepare the path for humanity, and it is these mainly to which the Mother refers in the passage that I just read and which she says are the experiences both Sri Aurobindo and she had to pass through in their joint endeavour to trace out a straight and sunlit path for humanity to follow. In the limited scope of my introductory speech I do not intend to quote them here. I will content myself only with quoting a few lines from a poem of Sri Aurobindo, “A God’s Labour”, which has the same theme:

“He who would bring the heavens here
Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
And tread the dolorous way.”³

It is thus after a prolonged Herculean labour that Sri Aurobindo is able to

¹ *On Himself* (Cent Ed, Vol 26), p 465

² *Sweet Mother*, Words recorded by Mona Sarkar (1978), p 28

³ *Collected Poems*, (Cent Ed, Vol 5), p 99

give us the firm assurance that a sunlit path to the Divine Life has been traced out for those who wish to take to it. And the Mother too has assured in unequivocal terms

“Keep sheltered in my arms—they will protect you against everything. Open to my help, it will never fail you”¹

Out of deep love for her children, the Mother has already prepared the sunlit path for us. Not only so but, as she has said in a message, she has brought down a whole “wonderful world of delight” which is “waiting at our gates for our call, to come down upon earth”²

This world of delight is the world of Divine Life. If we follow her sunlit path it will surely take us to it or bring it to us.

How to follow that path to the Divine Life?

The answer is already contained in the message that I just read. The indispensable condition is that we ourselves must call for it, that is to say, sincerely want it, aspire for it, because it cannot be forced upon us if we do not feel an urgent need for it. If we are satisfied with human life as it is, even at its best, it means that we do not have an aspiration for the Divine Life. It is only a few, whom the Mother calls “exceptional souls”, who feel that call and who have that spirit of adventure needed to embark upon the journey that leads to it. It is they for whom the Mother’s sunlit path is laid and who can tread it safely and joyously sheltered in her arms.

The Mother’s sunlit path is open for all and she is calling everyone to follow it and live in that “wonderful world of delight” which she has brought right to our gates. But we must open our gates to it—otherwise how can we live in it?

To follow the Mother’s sunlit path therefore is not unconditional. There are a few essential conditions of which the most essential is what I have just mentioned—the call, the aspiration, the yearning for the Divine Life. There are others also, but I need not explain them myself here. The other speakers following me will do that for you.

¹ Huta, *White Roses*, p. 10 © Huta

² *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent. Ed.), Vol. 15, p. 186