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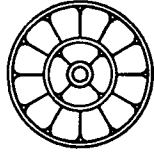
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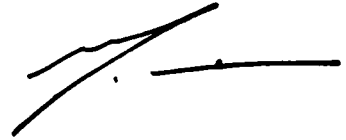


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled



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All correspondence to be addressed to

MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002, India

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Editor K D SETHNA

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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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15 AUGUST—SRI AUROBINDO

I

MAYA could never bind him, for he came
Armed with a white omnipotence of soul.
What crown could dazzle, when he wore the flame
Of God's eternity as aureole?

Unvisioned Master of miraculous
Impenetrable light beyond decay,
He bodied forth his rapture luminous
To rouse the dead divinity of clay.

Nought shall oppose his fire, the golden heat
Of his transmuting mercy—grace sublime
That from each heart at his heroic feet
Burns with a benison the murk of time

II

All heaven's secrecy lit to one face
Crowning with calm the body's blinded cry—
A soul of upright splendour like the noon!

But only shadowless love can breathe this pure
Sun-blossom fragrant with eternity—
Eagles of rapture lifting, flickerless,
A golden trance wide-winged on golden air.

III

Bard rhyming earth to paradise,
Time-conqueror with prophet eyes,
Body of upright flawless fire,
Star-strewing hands that never tire—
In him at last earth-gropings reach
Omniscient calm, omnipotent speech,
Love omnipresent without ache!

Does still a stone that cannot wake
Keep hurling through your mortal mind
Its challenge at the epiphany?

If you would see this blindness break,
 Follow the heart's humility—
 Question not with your shallow gaze
 The Infinite focused in that face,
 But, when the unshadowed limbs go by,
 Touch with your brow the white footfall.
 A rhythm profound shall silence all!

AMAL KIRAN

15 AUGUST—ETERNAL INDIA

How can you say our day is dimming?
 We live by a never-setting sun
 While sacred memories cease not hymning
 The beauty of the timeless One.

Here where the running hours remember
 The life that saints of old have led,
 The holy steep you strive to clamber
 Shall turn familiar to your tread.

For here our heart is linked with ages
 And burns with all that flamed before,
 And clasps through union with past sages
 The Unknown as if a friend of yore.

Among us ancient spirits hover
 To lift the young aspirant high—
 Take but a step and you'll discover
 That you have climbed a mile thereby.

And Gods shall come half way, arisen
 To bear towards heaven your earth's small song
 And the One you strain to seek for a season
 Himself shall seek you all year long!

NARIK LAMA

SOME UNPUBLISHED NOTES BY SRI AUROBINDO

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

IN one of Sri Aurobindo's notebooks in which he used to write passages for *Savitri*, two and a half pages have been found of prose written roughly at the time he was replying to Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna) who had requested him to comment on some critical remarks about *Savitri* and about a few short mystical poems of Sri Aurobindo's in a letter by an academic friend, Frederic Mendonça, Professor of English Literature at St. Xavier's College, Bombay. The remarks had been made apropos of an article which later formed the last chapter "Sri Aurobindo—A New Age of Mystical Poetry" in Sethna's book *The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo*, first published in 1947 after having been read out in typescript to Sri Aurobindo and very favourably commented on by him.

Sri Aurobindo dictated to Nirodbaran a long letter to Amal, dated at the end 4.5.1947, reflecting on Mendonça's criticisms at considerable length. It is to be found at present on pp. 238-63 in volume 26 of the Birth Centenary Edition of Sri Aurobindo's collected works. Apparently between the spells of dictation, Sri Aurobindo made in his own hand some notes addressed to Amal. The script is difficult to read but an attempt has been made, mostly by Richard Hartz of the Ashram's Archives and Research Department, to decipher it. We are reproducing the original along with the decipherment.

An incidental point of interest is a reference here to "50,000 lines" in connection with *Savitri*. It harks back to a phrase of Amal's towards the close of *The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo* (p. 140, second line from below in the second edition, published in 1974): "its projected fifty thousand lines"—a phrase to which Sri Aurobindo did not demur when he came across it. Now we have directly from him a repetition of the number.

In 1946 Sri Aurobindo, reminding Amal of the *Savitri* which had been privately sent him, passage after passage, in 1936 and a little after, wrote: "You will see when you get the full typescript [of the first three Books] that *Savitri* has grown to an enormous length so that it is no longer quite the same thing as the poem you saw then...." In his already published letter on Mendonça Sri Aurobindo speaks of *Savitri* having been "planned not on the scale of *Lycidas* or *Comus* or some brief narrative poem, but of the longer epical narrative, almost a minor, though a very minor *Ramayana*..." One wonders why out of the several epics of the world this particular one is mentioned. Could it be because it is known to run to 50,000 lines? And, if Sri Aurobindo had not passed away on December 5, 1950, would he have enlarged his poetic masterpiece to about double its present length of nearly 24,000 lines?

We seem to have some ground for an affirmative answer from what Sri Aurobindo wrote to Nirodbaran on 29.3.1936. Nirodbaran had inquired: "We

have been wondering why you should have to write and rewrite your poetry—for instance, *Savitri* ten or twelve times—when you have all the inspiration at your command and do not have to receive it with the difficulty that faces budding Yogis like us.” Sri Aurobindo replied: “That is very simple I used *Savitri* as a means of ascension. I began with it on a certain mental level, each time I could reach a higher level I rewrote from that level. Moreover I was particular—if part seemed to me to come from any lower levels I was not satisfied to leave it because it was good poetry. All had to be as far as possible of the same mint. In fact *Savitri* has not been regarded by me as a poem to be written and finished, but as a field of experimentation to see how far poetry could be written from one’s own yogic consciousness and how that could be made creative. I did not rewrite *Rose of God* or the sonnets except for two or three verbal alterations made at the moment.”

THE NOTES

All this however is only a discussion of details here and there and is of a minor and incidental importance; what matters is the general estimate or the abiding impression of the poem upon the critic. His estimate is depreciatory and the impression is unfavourable. Some lines please him, but there is nothing of high value, nothing that moves and stirs as great poetry and indeed all poetry should do, much of it, if not most, is ordinary, good for prose, but without magic or the true poetic thrill, the rainbow you see is constructed of poor or false colours, the whole impression is of something vapid and artificial, even pseudo and phoney[.] That is what I am obliged to gather from his strictures and if it is correct and I am to accept it then I ought to stop writing the poem and consign all its manuscripts and typescripts to a salutary bonfire. For nobody has the right to inflict on the world such bad or poor poetry as that—that has given him at least a temporary hospitality which would be ill rewarded by saddling it with literary rubbish on the scale of 50,000 lines. Only a just conviction of being well inspired would authorise anybody to publish whatever verse he has had the temerity to write. Especially so ambitious a work as *Savitri* ought to justify at least in part the claims or promises made for it by its author or its admirers or else to disappear.

But is the impression altogether correct; is the estimate valid and absolute or the reasons given valid—for reasons are given, although for a personal impression or estimate they are not indispensable. Mendonça himself repeatedly stresses that these things are so as they appear to him in his own view—and he even admits that there might conceivably be something in the poem as a whole which is not apparent to him¹ and which would justify your own view of it. I am not myself convinced by his objections nor do I feel any moral obligation for the

¹ “to him” repeated in MS

bonfire, and I suppose I ought to give my reasons for thinking him wrong since you have asked me. I am not at all times impervious to criticism; I have accepted some of yours and changed my lines accordingly, I have also though not often accepted some adverse criticisms from outside and remoulded a line or a passage from the [poem] here and there. But your criticisms are based upon an understanding appreciation of the poem, its aim, meaning, method, the turn and quality of its language and verse technique. In your friend's judgments I find an entire absence of any such understanding and accordingly I find his criticisms to be irrelevant and invalid. What one does not understand or perceive its meaning and spirit, one cannot fruitfully criticise

Well, but on what [ground] can I justify my evaluation¹ since I cannot deny that your friend is a man [with] an appreciation of the spiritual and mystic to which domain Savitri claims to belong, as this is evidenced by his response to the Hound of Heaven and still more the magnificent and perfect "Kingdom of God" and much else in his letter evidences the quality of his culture and the value of his literary judgment?² Yes, but as I have pointed out, his judgments are temperamental, a personal reaction, not one entirely objective.

confrontation of the spiritual and the
 which does not put a close to the
 by which he respects the Hound of Heaven
 as both with respect and spirit
 "Kingdom of God" addressed by letter in
 to self is culture and the value of
 the judgment. He is, however, not
 his judgment is temperamental, upon reading,
 a personal reaction.

¹ Reading uncertain.

² Full stop in MS

THE GOLDEN POWER NOW PRESSING UPON THE WORLD

TWO TALKS BY THE MOTHER*

6 July 1966

EACH time I have been conscious of the Power, the experience has been similar. The Will from above is translated into a vibration which certainly takes on some vital force but which acts in a subtle physical domain. One perceives a certain quality of vibration which is difficult to describe, but which gives the impression of something coagulated, not fragmented, something which seems to be denser than air, but which is extremely homogeneous, with a golden luminosity, with a tremendous driving power, and which expresses a certain will—which is not of the same nature as human will, which has the nature of vision rather than of thought, it is like a vision that imposes itself in order to be realised—in a domain that is very close to material Matter, but invisible, except to the inner sight. And that vibration exerts a pressure on people, things, circumstances, to mould them according to its vision. And it is irresistible. Even people who think the opposite, who want the opposite, do what is wanted without wanting to; even the things that by their very nature are opposed to it are turned around.

For national events, relations among nations, world circumstances, it acts like that, constantly, constantly, as a tremendous Power. And so if one is oneself in a state of union with the divine Will, without any intervention of thought, or any conception or idea, one can follow it, one sees and knows.

The resistances of the inertia that is in every consciousness and in Matter mean that this Action, instead of being direct and perfectly harmonious, becomes confused, full of contradictions, clashes and conflicts; instead of everything resolving itself “normally”, so to say, smoothly—as it should be—all this inertia that resists and opposes, gives it a tangled movement in which things collide and there is disorder and destruction, which become necessary only because of the resistance, but which were *not indispensable*, which might not have existed—which truly speaking should not have been—because this Will, this Power is a Power of perfect harmony where each thing is in its place, and it organises things wonderfully. It comes as an absolutely luminous and perfect organisation, which one can see when one has the vision; but when it comes down and presses on Matter, everything begins to seethe and resist. Therefore,

* These talks relate to the action of the supramental Power upon the world. The first, an extract from her talk dated 6 July 1966, is reprinted from the *Collected Works of the Mother* (Vol 10), pp 232-35. The second talk dated 6 May 1972 is reprinted from “Notes on the Way” (*Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol 11), pp 313-18. The main title was given by the editor of the *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, in the thirty-seventh number of which they were first reproduced.

to attempt to impute the disorders and confusions and destructions to the divine Action, to the divine Power, is another human foolishness. It is the inertia—not to mention the bad will—which *causes* the catastrophe. It is not that the catastrophe was intended, nor even foreseen, it is *caused* by the resistance.

And then, there is added the vision of the action of Grace, which comes to moderate the results wherever possible, that is to say, wherever it is accepted. And this explains why aspiration, faith, complete trust on the part of the earthly human element, have a harmonising power, because they allow the Grace to come and set right the consequences of this blind resistance.

This is a clear vision—clear, clear, even in the details.

One could, if one wanted to, make prophecies by saying what has been seen. But there is a kind of super-compassion which prevents this prophecy, because the Word of Truth has a power of manifestation and to express the result of the resistance would make that state concrete and diminish the action of the Grace. That is why even when one sees, one cannot speak, one *must not speak*.

But Sri Aurobindo certainly meant that it is this Power, this Force which does everything—which does everything. When one sees it or is one with it, one knows at the same time, one knows that *That* is really the only thing that acts and creates; everything else is the result of the domain or the world or the material or the substance in which it acts—the result of the resistance, but not the Action. And to unite with *That* means to unite with the Action; to unite with what is below means to unite with the resistance.

And so because it wriggles and tosses and turns, wants and thinks and makes plans . it imagines that it is doing something—it is resisting.

Later, a little later, I shall be able to give examples for very small things, showing how the Force acts and what interferes and mixes with it, or is moved by this Force and distorts its movement, and the result, that is to say, the physical appearance as we see it. Even the example of a very small thing with absolutely no importance for the world, gives a clear idea of the way in which everything happens and is distorted here.

And this applies to everything, everything, all the time, all the time. And so, when one is doing the yoga of the cells, one notices the same thing: there is the Force that acts, and then (*Mother laughs*) what the body does with this Action!...

(*Silence*)

Immediately there comes the how and why. But that belongs to the domain of mental curiosity, because the important thing is to stop the resistance. That is the important thing, to stop the resistance so that the universe can become what it should be: the expression of a harmonious, luminous, wonderful power, of an unparalleled beauty. Afterwards, when the resistance has stopped, if out of curiosity we want to know why it happened...it won't matter any more. But now,

one cannot find the remedy by seeking the reason why, but by taking the true attitude. That is the only thing that matters.

To stop the resistance by a total surrender, a total self-giving in every cell, if one can do that.

They begin to feel the intense delight of existing only by the Lord, for the Lord, in the Lord.

When this is established everywhere, all will be well.

*

6 May 1972

(Mother "looks inwardly".)

Do you see something?

(*Silence*)

I believe I already told you that there is as though a golden Force which is pressing down (*gesture of pressing*) that has no material consistence and yet seems to be tremendously heavy...

Yes, yes.

...and which is pressing upon Matter, thus, to compel it to turn towards the Divine *inwardly*—not an outward escape (*gesture upward*), but inwardly to turn to the Divine. And so the apparent result is as though catastrophes were inevitable. And yet along with this perception of inevitable catastrophe, there are at the same time solutions to the situation, events which come about that are by themselves altogether miraculous. It is as though the two extremes were becoming more extreme, as though what is good was becoming better and what is bad becoming worse. It is like that. With the formidable Power that is *pressing* upon the world—that was my impression.

Yes, it is perceptible.

Yes, it is felt like that (*Mother fingers the air*). And then in the circumstances, many things that happen generally in an indifferent way become acute; situations, differences become acute; bad wills become acute; *and*, at the same time, extraordinary miracles—extraordinary! People are saved who were about to die, things that were inextricable all of a sudden get sorted out.

And then, for individuals also, it is the same thing.

They who know how to turn towards... (how to say it?) who sincerely call the Divine, who feel that it is the only salvation, the only way out, and who sincerely give themselves, then (*gesture of breaking through*) in a few minutes it becomes wonderful. For the smallest things—there is nothing small or big, important or unimportant—it is all the same.

The values change.

It is as though the vision of the world changes.

(*Silence*)

It is, as it were, to give an idea of the change in the world by the descent of the Supramental Truly things that were neutral become absolute: a little error becomes categorical in its consequences, and a little sincerity, a little true aspiration becomes miraculous in its result. The values have intensified in people and even from the material point of view the smallest fault, the very smallest, has big consequences, and the least sincerity in the aspiration has wonderful results. The values have intensified, become precise.

Mother, you speak of fault, error—I do not know if it is an aberration, but I am having a more and more precise impression that fault, error, all that is not true. It is not like that. It is a means...how to say? yes, it is a means for widening the field of aspiration.

Yes, yes, perfectly so.

The perception of the whole is that everything is...everything is willed with a view to the conscious ascent of the world. The consciousness is preparing to become divine. And it is perfectly true: what we consider as faults are altogether part of the ordinary human conception, altogether, altogether.

The only fault—if there is any—is not to want the other thing. But from the time one wants the other thing...

But it is not a fault, it is an imbecility!

Well, it is very simple. The whole creation must want nothing but the Divine, nothing but to manifest the Divine. And all that it does, even all its so-called errors are only means towards making it inevitable for the whole creation to manifest the Divine—but not the “Divine” as man conceives him to be, “this and not that”, with all kinds of restrictions: a *Totality* of tremendous power and light. It is truly the Power in the world, a new and tremendous Power that has come into the world and must manifest itself and must make “manifestable” (if one may so put it) this Divine All-Power.

I have come to this conclusion. I have looked, I have observed and I have

seen that what we call “supramental”, lacking a better word this Supramental makes the creation more sensitive to the higher Power; we call that “divine” because we... It is divine in relation to what we are, but... It is something (*gesture of descent and pressure*) which must make Matter more sensitive and more... “responsive” to the Force. How to say it? At present whatever is invisible or insensible is unreal for us (I mean to say for the human being in general). We say that there are “concrete” things and things that are not so; yet this Puissance, this Power that is *not material*, becomes more concretely powerful upon earth than earthly material things. Yes, it is that.

This is the protection and the means of defence for supramental beings. It will be a thing which is not material in appearance but which has a greater power *over Matter* than material things. This is becoming more and more true from day to day, from hour to hour—the feeling that this Force, when it is directed by what we call “the Divine”, it *can*, truly it can—you understand—it has the power to move Matter, it can produce a *material* accident; and it can efface the consequences of an absolutely material thing—it is stronger than...Matter. This is what is altogether new and incomprehensible; and therefore it produces a kind of panic in the ordinary consciousness of people. Yes, it is that. It seems... it is *no more* what it was And truly there is something new—it is *no more* as it was.

All our common sense, all our logic, all our practical sense is dashed to the ground! useless! It has no force any more, no reality any more; it no longer corresponds to what is. It is truly a new world.

(*Silence*)

It is this in the body which finds it difficult to adapt itself to this new Power and creates the disorder and difficulties, the illnesses. But all of a sudden one feels that if one were wholly receptive, one would become formidable. That is the impression—the impression I am having more and more that if the whole consciousness (the whole of the most material consciousness—the most material) were receptive to this new Power...one would become for-mi-da-ble.

(*Mother closes her eyes.*)

But one essential condition: the reign of the ego must be ended. The ego is now the obstacle. The ego must be replaced by the divine consciousness—Sri Aurobindo himself called it “supramental”; we can call it supramental so that there might not be any misunderstanding, because when one speaks of “the Divine”, immediately people think of a “God”, and that spoils everything. It is not that. No, it is not that. (*Mother slowly brings down her closed fists.*) It is the descent of the supramental world, which is not a purely imaginative thing

(*gesture upward*), it is an *absolutely* material Power. But (*Mother smiles*) it has no need of material means.

A world which wants to take a body in the world.

(*Silence*)

Several times there have been moments when my body felt a kind of new unease and anxiety; and there was as though something which was not a voice, but which translated itself in words in my consciousness: "Why are you afraid? It is the new consciousness." It came several times. And then I understood.

(*Silence*)

You understand; it is this which in the human common sense says: "It is impossible, that has never been"; it is this which has come to an end. It is finished, it is foolish. It has become a stupidity. One might say: it is possible *because* it has never been. It is the new world and it is the new consciousness and it is the new Power, it is possible, and this is and will be more and more manifested *because* it is the new world, because it has never been

It will be because it has never been

(*Silence*)

It is beautiful: it will be because it has never been—*because* it has never been.

(*Mother enters into a long contemplation.*)

It is not material and it is more concrete than Matter!

Yes. It is crushing almost.

Crushing, yes, it is that.... Oh! it is...

All that is not receptive feels the crushing, but whatever is receptive feels on the contrary something like a...powerful widening.

Yes, but it is very strange, it is both!

Both at the same time.

Yes, one feels something like a swelling, as though the whole thing is going to explode, and at the same time there is something that is crushed.

Yes, but that which is crushed is the thing that resists, that is not receptive. It has only to open itself And then the thing becomes as though...a formidable thing .. It is extraordinary It is our habit of centuries, is it not, which resists and gives this impression; but whatever opens out .one feels as though one became large, large, large It is magnificent Oh! it is ..

THE SUN-WORLD

SOMETIMES

Beyond the blindness of night,
 You discover symbols
 Of the new Ganges,
 You cross the land of legends,
 Limitless infinities float
 Above the summits
 That no thought or song can climb,
 A sapphire regard
 Fills your vision's wildernesses
 There, by the upper streams,
 Cattle with horns of gold
 Move in speeding delight
 There, regurgitations of Time
 Bring not back sorrow's note
 But like images leaping to sounds,
 Like stars winging to dreams,
 Words quiveringly hold
 The shining mass of mountains;
 And you reach the sun-world.

R. Y. DESHPANDE

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

TWO PERSONAL LETTERS

I HAVE two letters from you and some photos. The first recounts the misery you feel when you don't hear from me for a long time. Part of your misery is due to your fear that I may be unwell or may even have bidden goodbye to the earth. Except for the infirmity of my legs I am in fair-enough health and have had no wish to become "the late lamented". In fact I am likely to be rather "late" in becoming "lamented": I am already past 86. So be of good cheer. And what is this appeal to me that if I quit the earth-scene I should carry you along with me? You are 30 years younger than I am. Life for people like us is for doing Yoga and you should never think of cutting short the wondrous opportunity we have of coming closer and closer in heart and mind to Sri Aurobindo's glorious Light and the Mother's gracious Beauty. As much sadhana as possible is to be packed in the span of time available to us. Sadhana cannot be done except in the process of terrestrial evolution where alone it is significant: apart or away from it are the non-evolutionary "typal" planes. On each of them the consciousness is fixed in its own type, already fulfilled and playing variations on the same satisfying theme, "with no need left to aspire", as Sri Aurobindo says in his poem "The Life Heavens". To adopt Tennyson's words, only on earth are there

Tears from the depth of some divine despair

and hence an environment and provision to seek a remedy for its ache and realise the Divine. Bodily life is precious for the chance given us of questing for God through birth after birth and turning all conditions here into a happy home for Him. At present He is only a visitor: we have to build a permanent habitation for Him, making Him a universal King not only in the inner recesses of an illumined mankind but also in the outer circumstances of a transformed humanity. So don't be in a hurry to quit "this transient and unhappy world", the Gita's *anityam asukham lokam imam*, without carrying out as much and as long as you can the command of Sri Krishna: *bhajaswa mām*, "love and worship Me." Sri Krishna has graced our times with a manifestation still more luminous than in the period of the Bharata War. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have touched our earth with the blessings of their holy feet. Let us do our best to follow in their footsteps. Particularly you who have heard the call of the Magic Flute from the very beginning of your life should lengthen to the utmost the years in which you can attune your heartbeats to its depth-awakening notes.

You have referred me to your palm extended in the photo of you in *bhava samadhi*. I looked at it as soon as I saw the picture. But the lines are not clearly shown. As for my own palms, the life-line of my left hand is rather short. It may

be pointing to the crisis I went through at the age of 34 when, as the Mother has said in a talk of hers, I would have surely died if something within hadn't instantaneously drawn her help because, according to the Mother, there happened to be the habit of remembering her and being in touch with her in a spontaneous and natural way. The line on my right palm is fairly long—strongly marked more than two-thirds of the way; then it becomes a little lighter but is long enough. So, from the point of view of palmistry, I shall be receiving your letters and communicating with you, though sometimes after a bit of delay, for quite a number of years. Set your sweet soul at rest and keep smiling as you so charmingly do in the photo you have enclosed of May 1964 with your landlady. Do you still smile often enough? You must guard against becoming too serious. Those whom Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have drawn into their radiance must let that spiritual sunshine come often to their faces.

Here I am not recommending just a jolly temperament, though that is an advantage. I am encouraging essentially the practice of being in contact with the glowing presence of our Gurus. By this contact I don't mean only the sense of them in our ever aspiring souls. I mean also a constant remembrance of their bodily existence—the forms in which they walked on our earth. Those who have seen and met them personally will find such remembrance automatic. But even those who have not can practice a lively substitute for it on the evidence of their photographs. The Mother has said that each of their pictures is charged with the light of their consciousness. So these pictures, in their own way, carry the same aura that accompanies the memory of them for those who have physically known them. To be aware keenly of their bodily being is the source of a profound joy which, besides leading us to look at outward events with an eager or a patient smile, becomes an easy yet most effective process of sadhana, for it helps us to infuse into all our words and acts in the midst of outward events the awareness of the Mother looking at us and calling us to let our inmost souls be at play in whatever we do. When there have been concrete manifestations of the Divine Reality, when the very bodily substance has proved to be the instrument of God-realisation, when living and moving persons amongst us have been communicative of the Eternal and the Infinite, it will indeed be a pity if we fail to be in as vivid a relationship as possible with such a great gesture of the Supreme's Grace towards us, weak and ignorant humans.

Tennyson has called each of us

An infant crying in the night,
An infant crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry.

In answer to this appeal from age to age the Heavenly Parents have come at last—in shapes like our own and assuming the myriad difficulties with which we

are beset so that by dissolving them in their own consciousness they may render available to us a solution of those resistances in ourselves. Because of these aims and achievements their bodies have grown centres of a beatific bounty. By concentrating on their bodies that have acted like ours yet won through to superhuman purity and peace, to deific love and power, we by faith and devotion can best attain our soul's fulfilment. Steeping our whole identity in a vision of the physical presence the highest Purusha and His Shakti have projected in order to assist and consummate our evolution, we should pass our lives. At least, this is what I strive to do, this is what I define as my "Integral Yoga". The sweet and hallowed memories of the Mother's heart-hushing movements and Sri Aurobindo's mind-kindling repose as I have known them down the years are fundamentally the process I feel as carrying me onward. And when anyone happens to come to me for advice or encouragement, all I attempt to do is to let my recollection of the Mother's multi-splendoured eyes animate my words with the new life she has brought and the image of Sri Aurobindo's imperturbable gaze render my silences significant with mysteries never revealed before his advent.

Here let me go a little off at a tangent though not without essential relevance to my theme. There are two sides to my not inappropriate digression. The Mother always responded to the genuine leap of the heart to her and in a couple of seconds she could fill us with the rapture of her response. I have observed that several people whose deep-seated connection with her was known to me spent less than a minute in their pranam to her. Within that short time there was a perfect give-and-take. Many took much longer. Whenever the length of time had a special movement of the inner being behind it, the Mother always had a patient appreciative concentration in answer to it. But often she seemed to be just indulgent and kind. I know that she set no great store by mere ceremony. This attitude applied in general to the common religious practice of mankind. Formal devotionism had little meaning for her. I have heard her say in effect: "Far better than church-going and temple-visiting and conventional rites is a simple disinterested act. The Divine does not crave for or need worship as such. Much more valuable in his eyes as a movement of spirituality is an unselfish deed."

On the other hand, the Mother was always alert to the special gift Sri Aurobindo and she had come, at a great deal of unspoken sacrifice, to give to suffering and aspiring humanity. Indescribable was the smile, at the same time most intimate as if tasting the nectar of a truly devoted soul's flow of itself towards her and most remote as though looking earthward from the height of an impersonal plenitude of a hitherto-unknown grace—the smile that often went out from her to her children during their daily exchanges of love. Her sense of the new light which Sri Aurobindo had drawn from rare altitudes and was being lavishly distributed by her to their disciples was always lively—in fact it could not help being such to one who was an incarnation of this light. That sense made her

keenly aware of whether or not the people who approached her were alive to the novel bounty I recollect her telling me once about some visitors who had meditated with her: "They sat absorbed in what was evidently to them a fine spiritual state, but there was no connection at all with me!" Doubtless, she appreciated their attainment but she knew also the waste of the largesse she had been born to scatter and the loss to these seekers who happened to be locked up in whatever they had caught of the world's great spiritual past without becoming sensitive to the enlarging continuation of it for which Sri Aurobindo and she had accepted the burden of embodiment.

Your smiling photo has led me quite far a-field Another one shows a rather Shakespearian forehead. I am sure it would have pleased our Master. He regarded Shakespeare as extraordinarily intuitive in his poetic expression Perhaps he would have found your facial expression a pointer to an inner intuitiveness?

I see from what you have written that the spiritual pursuit is the most instinctive thing for you and that your resolve not to get married was never an ascetic fight with yourself: it was absolutely in accord with the trend of your own being. Lucky girl to be blessed with such an in-born turn towards the All-Blissful from your very teens

(29 4 1991)

*

I am glad that, looking at the picture of me which is with you, you find my forehead as Shakespearian as yours. My resemblance to the Bard must be closer because I am far nearer than you as a woman can be to the scarcity of hair above the forehead—another characteristic of the great Elizabethan dramatist. How he got so baldish at a relatively early age is a mystery. He died at the age of 52. Of course, he had his worries as we know from his Sonnets, but were they bad enough to weaken his hair-roots? I can imagine a particular worry doing immense damage. It is the one he would have been visited with if he had been like that strange entity which has inspired one of the greatest phrases his intuitive poetic mind created:

the prophetic soul
Of the wide world dreaming on things to come.

If he could have prophesied the bitter controversy that has raged in later times as to whether he himself penned those 36 plays bearing his name or they were the work of either Francis Bacon, Christopher Marlowe, George Chapman or else Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford; he would have been upset enough to tear his hair! I am sure he was never given to any such "dreaming on things to come". So I can't understand why at 52 years his pate was almost hairless. Maybe when the life-expectancy was much less than in modern times the bodily changes were

speeded up. The age of 52 was considered in the sixteenth century to make one quite venerably old because the average life-span was no more than 60 years. As the famous Sonnets prove, the age of 40 was rated as furrowing and drying up one's face and beginning to run one's blood cold. If the poet's own physiognomy is mirrored in these works, I must be comparatively in the prime of life at 86 years and 6 months since people remark about my "mug" that though my jowls sag a little my eyes have neither crow's-feet nor pouches.

Now a brief reflection on palmistry. I am surprised that you have gone one better on me by showing no life-line at all on your left palm! I have always had doubts about palmistry and this fact should clinch them. Facts of my own palms should also help my scepticism. Just as my life-line is very short on my left hand, my head-line is deeply marked for a very brief length on my right. Afterwards there is a faint continuation. This should show that I was in good mental shape for about half my life and then began to deteriorate into a blooming idiot. At present I must be pretty advanced in mindlessness. Perhaps it is true in a sense beyond the comprehension of palmists. For it is only when the mind ceases to act that the higher light takes up the job of working in its place. I am very far from being able to say about myself what Sri Aurobindo once wrote to me about his mind—namely, that it was eternally quiet and that everything came to him from "overhead" But my practice, helped all the time by Sri Aurobindo, of receiving poetic inspiration again and again from the planes above the creative intelligences—Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind—has trained the mental Me not exactly to escape

from the confines of thought
To where Mind motionless sleeps waiting Light's birth¹

but at least to follow the inspiring precept:

Out of our thoughts we must leap up to sight²

or else to call down splendid surprises of vision and rhythm without letting the usual inhabitants of the thought-world interfere with the Higher Mind's large clarities of spiritually vibrant Ideas, the Illumined Mind's passion and colour of revelatory images, the Intuition's sudden glowing stabs into the very heart of things, the Overmind's massive mighty movements bringing forth an eternal world-voice from even the smallest transience of Nature's process and human life.

Further, the practice of intent receptivity to the Beyond in the midst of the common run of thinkings and willings and remembering has given an ease to

¹ *Savitri* (Centenary Ed), p. 383

² *Ibid.*, p. 276

these ordinary mental modes so that there is very little sense of exertion and an almost utter absence of what is termed “brain-fag” The usual intelligence seems urged by unseen hands and moved to brighter issues than it would normally envisage. No doubt, there are less spontaneous, less felicitous intervals but a fair amount of freedom from mental labour has been one of the boons granted by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Yes, great has been their grace in several ways. Yet how far am I from the spiritual states which were Aswapaty’s in *Savitri*! When will I be able to say about myself at all times any of the things said of him?—for instance:

Indifferent to the little outpost Mind
 He lived in the wideness of the Eternal’s reign.
 His being now exceeded thinkable Space,
 His boundless thought was neighbour to cosmic sight:
 A universal light was in his eyes,
 A golden influx flowed through heart and brain;
 A force came down into his mortal limbs,
 A current from eternal seas of Bliss;
 He felt the invasion and the nameless joy.¹

Enough of this digression about my own pluses and minuses. Let me return to your concerns You write: “My nature is serious from the very beginning but zealous always I become gloomy sometimes From 1981 to 1986 sadness and depression overwhelmed me but when I read your book *Light and Laughter* in 1984—end I felt pulled up ” You also say you heard Sri Aurobindo’s voice telling you during a meditation: “Weeping and depression are not for you You must be a warrior Be bold. Smile out.” If we are sincere in our choice of the spiritual path, we shall always have the presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother with us and that presence is at the same time an extreme sweetness and a never-failing strength. Physical suffering is not always avoidable—a headache or a rheumatic joint may have to be endured, but it is possible to keep the heart suffused with a quiet joy which does not depend on anything for its existence, since it is the outflow of the soul’s little bit of oneness with the secret blissful basis of all that exists—the Divine Mystery which is always waiting to enfold our sighs and our sufferings because of that most wonderful of all paradoxes: Eternity in love with Time

I am glad you are constantly reading those two supreme masterpieces of Sri Aurobindo *Savitri* and *The Life Divine* They are also rated as perhaps the most difficult of his writings—but their charm is that the difficult matter is conveyed in the most engrossing manner. Whether or not you follow precisely the thought

¹ *Ibid* , p 39

building up in *The Life Divine*, the breath of its inspiration carries you onward and upward and you feel that even if you can't trace minutely with your mind all the lines and curves of this colossal architecture your being seems to get stretched wide and pulled high as though a new personality were in process of construction. Of course if one is able to follow the various directions of the multitudinous yet accurately marshalled thought one will be aware of the inner restructuring with greater clarity, but even otherwise invisible hands will go on raising up in your depths a more Aurobindonian You. For here is not a Spinoza or Hegel challenging you to trace the edifice of his speculative system: here is God's grace seeking to impress on the deepest part of your mind the shape of the cosmic vision projected by a power beyond the mind Sri Aurobindo's philosophical revelation is bent on giving itself to you and, whether you completely grasp or not its grand details, it will enter into you and remain there a vibrant mass of glorious meanings fashioning anew your look on life and universe and godhead. The only condition we may take it to make is that you should not read too much at a stretch. The moment you feel the slightest strain, stop. Read slowly, happily and try to imagine that your head is open at the top, for all that Sri Aurobindo has written has its origin in what we may call the Spirit's ether.

This way of reading and of receptivity holds even more for *Savitri*, since *Savitri* is intenser literature than *The Life Divine*. Not only does it go into more vivid disclosures of spiritual reality: it also comes with a more resonant rhythm—its sound has a far-reaching effect, it is charged with what one may designate the very life-throb of occult realms, it carries in its surge or sway of interrelated words and modulated metre the footprints and footfalls, as it were, of divinities in traffick with earth.

You have referred to my comments on *Savitri* in my book *Sri Aurobindo—the Poet*. They comprise three articles. The first tells how *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo's long-kept secret, got slowly divulged to me in private, with a tremendous response from me and a profound gesture of gratitude on my part. The second tries to explicate the sense of the poem's opening passage on "the hour before the Gods awake". The night spoken of here has baffled many readers. They have the impression that Sri Aurobindo is describing the very commencement of the cosmic manifestation from the Inconscience. But, as shown by his letters to me as well as by hints in the passage itself—

•
 In the sombre symbol of her eyeless muse...
 As in a dark beginning of all things .
 A mute featureless semblance of the Unknown...

he is speaking in terms of symbolism and comparison and similitude. What he is dealing with is the night preceding the dawn of the day on which "Satyavan must die". Like the dawn which serves as a symbol of the divine illumination to come

for man's consciousness in the future, this night is made to image the Divine's utter self-concealment in what the Rġveda calls "darkness wrapped within darkness" at the start of the universe's evolution. My third piece dwells on the various qualities of *Savitri* as a poem and as a revelation.

You have paid a great compliment to my letters to you. If they stimulate you inwardly and even infuse more life into you so that you are helped to get over your bouts of ill-health I am deeply thankful to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother whom I invoke every time I write. Before I put pen to paper or tap the keys of my typewriter I look within me and associate our Gurus with the act of communicating with my friends. Be the subject seemingly trivial or patently serious, there is always this association and in touching on serious matters I try as much as possible not merely to paraphrase out of a book but to convey what has been proved upon my own pulses.

Let me close with telling you of the soul-"pulsing" of a few days back. At the Samadhġ usually something or other which leaves a happy mark on me takes place. At times the mark is very deep. On the 9th of this month the afternoon air brought particularly a breath of silence and solitude but with a secret in them of some unimaginable future outflowing. Suddenly a mantra of Vivekananda's sprang to my mind as if to crystallise the condition in which I was caught up. Vivekananda once spoke of his ideal of sitting in meditation under a height in the Himalayas and hearing a waterfall thunder forth. "Hara! Hara!—Vyom! Vyom!" (Sanskrit for "The Free! The Free! The Void! The Void!"). I felt completely divested of all bonds, all attachments and the whole courtyard seemed entirely empty of every creature, yet there was no sense of any deprivation. A mysterious fullness within a wondrous vacuity: such was my "experience". What was totally free and void appeared to be waiting to be repopulated—by millions of Sri Aurobindos, a countless number of the Divine Mother! It was the thrilling presage of a transformed humanity, a perfected earth-life. This prophetic part of the "experience" denoted the new turn given by the Integral Yoga—the creative turn—to the glorious escapism of the old spirituality, the grand flight from the finite and the fugitive. No ultimate power was conceived in the past, as coming back from the Absolute to renovate everything in the future so as to evoke from some super-Shakespearian Miranda the cry:

O wonder!

How many goodly creatures are there here!

How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world

That has such people in't!

(13.5 1991)

AMAL KIRAN (K. D. SETHNA)

THE ASHRAM CHILDREN AND SRI AUROBINDO'S LIFE

A DREAM-DIALOGUE

(Continued from the issue of July 1991)

ONE of the children said:

“We have often complained about the food served in our Dining Room. But we shall never again do it—after hearing your stories.”

“Actually it is the psychological suffering that is hardest to bear, that can even make one mad. Compared to it, problems about food become quite insignificant.”

“But you never felt disturbed, mentally, did you?”

“Of course I did, at the beginning I was quite troubled. God has made me undergo all sorts of travails and difficulties. But His infinite Grace that never left me always showed me the way out of them. I have already told you about the Lalbazar Police Station. Again, when I was locked up in that small cell in Alipore, my mind was in turmoil. Perhaps if I had had books to keep me company, I might have suffered less.”

“Weren't you allowed books even?”

“For that, I needed the permission of the Government authorities, first; and this took me a few days.”

“We have been told that Sri Krishna Himself instructed you to read the Gita. Is that so?”

“That is so. But it would have been so much easier if He had provided me with the book, along with his instructions. However, while I waited for the Gita to be given to me, I realised fully the difficulties of an absolutely solitary confinement. Even men who are strong and wise may lose their minds in such isolation. I also realised that the Lord, in his infinite mercy, had provided me with a perfect opportunity to turn to Him and to unite myself with Him.”

“You have been referring to mental suffering. Does the mind indeed suffer?”

(With a smile) “You do know what physical suffering is, don't you? Fever or toothache? Well, just as the body aches and pains, so does the mind. You don't understand what I mean, just now, since you are all too young still to have a mental life. But all the same, imagine yourself shut up in a room, completely alone, even for a day. No one to talk to, not even a story-book, nothing at all to help you pass the time. You will then find yourself in a state of acute mental suffering. All kinds of thoughts will come to torment you without your being able to stop them from approaching you. In fact you will feel you are going mad.”

“I know what you mean. I went through something like that once. I remember being rather upset, and so I thought that if I went to bed early, I

would forget about my problems. But the moment I was in my bed, thoughts started whirling in my head so violently and fast, I felt I was going crazy.”

“Exactly Busy as we are most of the time, with work and people, we fail to realise the power of solitude. And then there is a great difference between being alone by choice and a solitude that is forced upon one.”

“Why is that so?”

“Well, when one chooses to be alone, one can obviously also choose not to be alone any more, don’t you see? Books and friends can replace the silence that surrounds one. Whereas when solitude is imposed on a person, this is not the case. That is why, perhaps, it is said that those who can live absolutely alone become gods Or maybe, beasts, I never believed that, until I was forced into solitude in jail. Only then did I realise how hard a condition it is to bear, even for one who is accustomed to the pursuit of yogic discipline. The Italian regicide Bressi was sentenced to seven years’ solitary confinement. The poor chap was stark raving mad by the end of the first year. That too is quite creditable, I think, since most people find it difficult to hold on to sanity just after the first few days.”

“But then what about the yogis who live alone in the Himalayas?”

“Put them in prison and then see what effect that has on them! (*Laughter*). I don’t mean that there are no yogis who can stand solitude. In fact, I myself arrived at that state, later. But not in the early days. Anyway, if a person can manage to survive such isolation, he has to be a yogi to do so ”

“How did you spend your time?”

“At first I decided I would meditate most of the time, but I found that I could not hold on to my concentration for more than two hours at a stretch, after which I felt extremely tired, both in mind and in body. Then I began to ponder about various subjects, but that too did not last. There were neither people nor books for the mind to focus its attention on It so happened, sometimes, that I found hundreds of thoughts whirling around my mind but failing to enter into it. This last experience is a painfully uncomfortable one. After that, I decided to dwell on the beauties and charms of Nature. But that too was hardly feasible, for Nature had reduced herself to just one single tree and a tiny little square of sky, no bigger than a handkerchief! It was too joyless a scene to bring me any kind of comfort or consolation. Almost in despair, I began to look around me when I found some big black ants near a hole in the floor. So I began to spend my time observing their comings and goings. La Fontaine too, it is said, enjoyed studying the movements of ants, but he did so out of pleasure and not out of necessity like me. Then I noticed some small red ants. The black ones stood in their way. What a battle ensued! The reds were no match for the blacks and were being killed in such large numbers that I began to feel sorry for them. So I went to their rescue. Don’t laugh at me but—”

“No, no, I’m not laughing. I am only very surprised.”

“At the way, even a learned and wise yogi like me can behave, isn't that so?”

“No, it's not that. I am only trying to understand why God made you endure so much hardship ”

“His ways are never easy to explain. We'll come to that by and by. Only remember always, that He in His infinite Mercy can even make use of pain to express his marvellous compassion. However, to get back to my ants. As you can well understand, it was not possible to be too long engrossed with ants. I knew I had to become much stronger, inwardly. I remembered how often I used to enjoy solitude and meditativeness earlier, and yet here I was, finding it so difficult to come to terms with my solitary confinement. With all my heart I called out to God to help me. The selfsame instant I experienced serenity like a balm spreading through my troubled being, a peace and a quiet happiness such as I had never known before I felt secure and protected, for I knew that the World-Mother was holding me safe on her lap just as a baby is held in the warmth and love of his mother's arms. All my suffering had been wiped out, it was as if it had never been. And from that day onwards, God gave me the power to feel joy and strength in the heart of every circumstance however difficult, be it physical or psychological in its nature. The difficulty seemed henceforth like a drop of water on a lotus leaf, at once slipping away. Later, when I was permitted to have books, my need for them had greatly diminished. I could very well have done without them ”

“Is prayer so effective? If so, you should not have waited so long and suffered so much before you prayed to God!”

(Smiling) “Quite true! But then one does not turn to God until one finds oneself in the direst straits. The human intelligence is rather proud of itself, you know. Only when all else fails does one remember God, even the God-hater and atheist call out to Him then. But don't you have faith in the effectiveness of prayer?”

“I do, of course I do. I remember one night after I had eaten something bad, I was tossing about in bed with a terrible stomach-ache (*Loud laughter*). Unable to bear it any longer, I called out to Mother. Suddenly I heard a voice—‘Be quiet, lie still.’ Someone seemed to hold me down on the bed and within minutes I was fast asleep.”

“So, there you are. You have your proof. It may be a small incident, but it shows you undeniably that prayer can be miraculously powerful. If you can pray to the Divine with all yourself, with mind and life and body, you can achieve the impossible. A call of this sort will bring Him close to you in an instant. I remember one such incident. A relative of mine was ill with a very virulent type of typhoid fever, in days when illnesses like typhoid and pneumonia and T.B. were considered fatal. In my cousin's case too, the doctors had given up hope saying that there was nothing they could do. Finally it was her family's prayer

alone that saved her. Nowadays, of course, one doesn't need to depend on prayer to save people from these illnesses, there are medicines enough to cure them."

"Did you find out what it was that God intended for you?"

"What? Don't you believe me? Are you all Nirod's students? (*Laughter*). Well, firstly it was to realise how cruel, even unnecessary were the modes of imprisonment, and hence the need for prison reforms. I decided that these barbaric ways must disappear, once India became free. Secondly, it was to make me aware of how weak and troubled my mind could be, in order to make me decide to conquer that defect once and for all. For, to the true aspirant or yogi, it makes little difference whether he lives plunged in solitude or in the very heart of a multitude. And once I had realised this, I knew that even if I had to live alone for twenty years, I would not be perturbed. Thirdly, I also understood that my yoga would not be achieved by my own efforts but rather through faith and surrender, that a complete self-giving alone made all spiritual realisations possible, that all I needed to do was to be ready to receive the gifts of His Grace—His force, His knowledge, His delight. He made me aware of this by making me a detached spectator of the play of madness that He unfolded gradually in my own mind. For this, He had put me within the solitary confinement of the prison instead of letting me go astray, swept away by the life of the ordinary world.

"After these realisations, I grew stronger. I also learned to feel greater love and compassion for those who are made to suffer the cruel torments inflicted by their fellow human beings. I learned too of the miraculously successful effects of sincere prayer. There were, in fact, many more lessons that I learnt. The Divine can fulfil so many aims through one single stroke of His Will, because His force is never blind. In fact, He is all-wisdom. It is we who, in our ignorance, call Him cruel and unjust, even foolish! (*Laughter*). My grandmother used to say that if she ever met God she would teach Him how to run the world. To which my grandfather would laughingly reply that that was just why He had made the mechanism of the world so terribly complicated, so that she might not be able to see Him! (*Laughter*). There is no end to the ill-treatment and suffering man metes out to the Avatar. It is the reward earth gives to the Divine who chooses to become human. Ask Nirod and the others how many hundreds of letters they have made me write. Of course, that isn't exactly ill-treatment!"

"Did you really answer letters all through the night?"

"For six or seven hours, regularly, year after year. This alone should prove to you that even if I may not have become the Divine, I must have come pretty close to Him. (*Laughter*)."

"But we were not lucky enough to receive any letters from you!"

"Good Lord! Do you too wish to become as heartless as your elders!"

"No, of course not. But why did you have to write so much?"

“Because at that stage of the sadhana, it was very necessary. Our sadhana here does not follow any one path, you see.”

“Which is the path you are following now?”

“Well, now that you children are here, the main preoccupation is for your welfare. Your food, your health. Doctor Nripen says ‘Give the children more vitamins.’ Pranab asks for more exercises, also for eggs, meat and fish, sometimes even a picnic or two. Pavitra and Sisir ask for a school and for Knowledge! (*Laughter*). And there is a great deal more. All these have to become part of our sadhana. So, you see, the problem is not so simple. Mother has so much more work now, so many more responsibilities. She has truly become a mother. She has to organise everything, look after everyone, give chocolates to some, fruits and flowers to others. There are quarrels she must pacify and tempers she has to cool. Am I not right? While all the while I am sitting here—look at me—in the peace and seclusion of my room! (*Laughter*). Do you know of any other Yogashram like this one?”

“The Mother does so much for us, and yet why is it that we fail to realise the infinite and exceptional grace we are receiving from Her?”

“Does a mother cease to love her child just because he is stupid? Truths that you cannot realise today will become evident tomorrow. Even if all of you don’t, at least some of you will perceive them. The Divine’s selfless causeless Love and Grace alone can transform the world.”

“Is it true, as some say, that if the Mother had not come here, your yoga would have remained incomplete?”

“Absolutely true. The Mother is the Shakti, and hers is the force that realises and manifests Truth. If She had not come here, neither would you all have done so. That is certain.” (*Laughter*)

“Then it must have been preordained that She would come here and that we too should follow suit?”

Sri Aurobindo smiled silently and sweetly:

“Have you read the speech I made at Uttarpara?”

“Yes, we have.”

“Then you should have known what was the real reason behind my imprisonment. It was the Divine who drew me away from the political field to keep me secluded in a prison cell. I have told you that.”

“But we thought it was the Government that arrested you.”

“That is how it seemed, on the surface. We do not realise how complex human lives are, to how many forces they are subjected. Anyway. I alluded to that speech because in it I have said that it was Sri Krishna who took me to jail where he told me that He would prepare me for His special Work. Then, giving me the Gita, He asked me to practise the yoga of the Gita. He also gave me the power to do so.”

“How did He give you the Gita?”

(*Laughter*) “Why? Doesn’t the Mother give you fruits and flowers in your dreams? They do not have to be material objects, do they? In the same way, Sri Krishna’s gift to me was on the subtle plane.”

“What is the Yoga of the Gita?”

“To work for the Lord, without any thought about the fruits of the action. It is the same thing that you are expected to do here: at all times, in all ways, in your studies and in your actions.”

“The Mother too has practised the Yoga of the Gita, has she not?”

“Of course.”

“But how? and when?”

(*Laughing*) “Didn’t I just tell you that man is an instrument played upon by various forces? The same Force which used me guided her. That is the reason why we have the same work to fulfil.”

“Then both of you are born for the same purpose?”

(*Smiling*) “Isn’t that obvious?”

“But you are Indian and She is French!”

“Isn’t even that necessary for the work?”

“Maybe, but I can’t perceive why it should be needed.”

“Why should you find it so difficult to understand? Do you think any Indian woman today could do the kind of varied creative work on the material field in the way She has? There are deeper reasons too. And this is only one aspect of her work. When you grow up you will realise how rich and complex her activities are.”

“Oh! I never thought of it like that!”

“You should learn to think. Sri Ramakrishna often used to say that divine mechanisms are beyond human understanding. The analogy he enjoyed making was that of a figure of salt who, wishing to measure the ocean, enters into its waters only to melt instantly into nothingness.” (*Laughter*)

“Then we too shouldn’t think or worry about anything!”

“Worry you need not, certainly. Nor judge God’s ways. But since you are students you should certainly learn the art of rational thinking.”

(*To be continued*)

NIRODBARAN

(*Translated by Jhumur from the Bengali*)

SOME EPISODES FROM THE LIFE OF “AN EXTRAORDINARY GIRL”

A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION

(Continued from the issue of July 1991)

An Interlude of Visions and Experiences

THERE are three books I have read so often that almost all the episodes from them are fresh in my memory. They are the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, and *Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*. The last, in particular, was a cherished part of every Bengali household, and contributed a great deal to the spiritual culture of Bengal. In addition I had paid frequent visits to Dakshineswar and Belur Math since my childhood. I have already told you how Bharat Maharaj loved me from my youngest days. Due to all these associations, and perhaps due also to something in my past life, Sri Ramakrishna, who is also known as “Thakur”, blessed me quite often with his darshan, though I was not actually his devotee.

In *Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*, he has said that if one repeated the word “Gita” ten times daily for a week, one would realise the Divine. I took his words literally, thinking, “Since Thakur has said it, it must be so. If the realisation can be so easily attained, I must give it a trial.” I started in right earnest, and felt a great force coming down. At the end of three days, however, a profusion of unexpected mishaps began to occur. Illness, dangers, disharmonies, misfortunes surrounded me like a conspiracy and with a force that threatened to shatter my bones. Meanwhile, I kept hearing a voice saying, “Give it up, give it up, you won’t be able to bear it.” And things came to such a pass that I had to abandon the attempt after all. Who could imagine that the two syllables “Gi-ta” could have so much power?

Once I saw Thakur in a dream. He was surrounded by his disciples and was enjoying their company. Suddenly he exclaimed, “Where is Esha, where is Esha? Hasn’t she come?” Vivekananda, who was standing nearby, pointed his finger at me seated in a corner and replied, “There she is.”

This brings me to the vision I had of Vivekananda himself, which I had for the first time a few days back. I saw him in my sleep standing before my window. He was looking at me intently and smiling with loving sweetness. He was dressed in his usual Sannyasi garb and was looking magnificent, his eyes and face shining with a divine lustre. I couldn’t help crying out, “How beautiful, how beautiful he looks!” Whereupon he replied, “Not as beautiful as your uncle!”

“No, no!” I protested. “There is no comparison!” Then he vanished.

A few months ago someone came to me with her paintings of saints, of which one was of Sri Ramakrishna. It was really well done. I had been wishing

for some time to have a picture of Thakur and here it was. The lady said that she was in need of money, and asked me if I could find a customer for the painting. She would sell it at Rs. 300/- I would have bought it but not at such a high price. So I suggested that we put it up for sale at a friend's shop. But though the painting was displayed there it did not sell. When after some time it was returned to the artist, she approached me again and pressed me to buy it. I offered a nominal sum of Rs. 100/- which she declined. But after a few days, she returned with the painting and said she would accept my offer, adding, "You know, Thakur appeared to me in a dream, and asked me to give the painting to you."

After she left, I said to Thakur, "You have come to me on the strength of a bargain!" Some days later, she returned me the money.

I told Sri Aurobindo, "Thakur appears so often to us. Why are you so rare?" He answered, "His work is different from mine. He has created some few great souls. My work is not to appear in visions but to change man from within and to change humanity. Have you changed much as a result of these visions? It is not that you have not seen me, you saw me and the Mother for many consecutive days. Do you remember? Tell me then, have you made much progress?" "No!"

"Not vision! What is important is to feel the Presence," he added.

Once I did see the Mother and Sri Aurobindo for fifteen days. Whichever way I looked, I saw them sitting within my forehead, very luminous. At first I was thrilled, but as the seeing continued, I became tired of it and it vanished.

I recall another story about one of Thakur's young disciples. This young man asked him dejectedly, "I have been with you for a number of years, but what have I gained and what, if anything, is in store for me?"

Thakur flared up. "What did you say? I tell you—those I have bitten once are doomed. My bite is like that of a cobra!"

I fell into a pensive mood, and like the young disciple began to think, "I have been with Sri Aurobindo for so many years. He has, in fact, brought me to yoga against my will. And now even though I am getting old, I have gained nothing substantial so far." Lying on the bed my mind was running on in this vein when I suddenly saw a light curtain hung between my bed and the wall sway gently. I became hushed and attentive, feeling that something was going to happen. And then I saw Sri Aurobindo appear from behind the curtain which had parted slightly. He looked exactly like the picture of him that we all have with us. Then he spoke. "I can give you a long lease of life so that you may realise the Divine. Will you accept it?"

Vehemently and spontaneously I cried out, "No, No! I don't want a long life. My son will die, my closest friends will go, and I'll be left all alone. You know how much I have suffered, and I don't want to suffer any more. How often I have already prayed to you to take me away!"

"Think again," he replied. "I have given you my promise."

"No, I don't want a long life," I insisted.

"All right," he replied sweetly. "I won't press you." Then raising his right hand in a gesture as in the statues of the Buddha, he disappeared. Oh, how beautiful his palm was as he raised it and held it before my eyes! It meant to me so much.

Nirodbaran responded to this account by saying, "But why were you so foolish as to refuse such a sublime boon? Don't you know that there can be no suffering from separation when the Lord is with you and leading you to the goal? It is he who will make you free of all bonds. So long as you keep such attachments intact, you cannot realise the Divine. What a childish thing to have done!"

The other day I was bemoaning the tragic fate that had overtaken Rajiv Gandhi, and was saying to myself, "He was such a fine personality. What a desperate condition India has been reduced to, these days! There has never been such chaos, confusion and violence since India gained independence. No one seems to be safe today." While I was lost in these gloomy thoughts, I heard Sri Aurobindo telling me, "There is nothing to be surprised about. Among the leaders there is hardly a true lover of India. Almost all of them want power, position, fame, and money. Corruption is rampant everywhere, so what else can you expect? In our time, we truly loved India. People sacrificed their lives for the sake of the Motherland. We never forgot God. We felt his power working through us. All the leaders were the disciples of yogis. And the *Bande Mataram* acted like a mantra. It echoed from shore to shore, state to state. That was India then. And today? Nobody takes the name of God. And *Bande Mataram*! So long as it is like that, India will suffer. This trouble will continue for a long time. Then a change will come. You may not be alive to see that change. But I will raise up India."

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

NIRODBARAN'S NOTE

HERE it will be relevant to quote some words by the Mother given many years ago.

A DECLARATION

Sri Aurobindo withdrew from politics; and, in his Ashram, a most important rule is that one must abstain from all politics—not because Sri Aurobindo did not concern himself with the happenings of the world, but because politics, as it is

practised, is a low and ugly thing, wholly dominated by falsehood, deceit, injustice, misuse of power and violence; because to succeed in politics one has to cultivate in oneself hypocrisy, duplicity and unscrupulous ambition.

*

Sri Aurobindo always loved deeply his Motherland. But he wished her to be great, noble, pure and worthy of her big mission in the world. He refused to let her sink to the sordid and vulgar level of blind self-interests and ignorant prejudices. This is why, in full conformity to his will, we lift high the standard of truth, progress and transformation of mankind, without caring for those who, through ignorance, stupidity, envy or bad will, seek to soil it and drag it down into the mud. We carry it very high so that all who have a soul may see it and gather round it.

25 April 1954

FROM NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE

September 16, 1933

Q. In your scheme of things do you definitely see a free India? You have stated that for the spreading of spirituality in the world India must be free. I suppose you must be working for it! You are the only one who can do something really effective by the use of your spiritual Force.

A. That is all settled. It is a question of working out only. The question is what is India going to do with her independence? Bolshevism? Goonda-raj? Things look ominous.

TWO POEMS

1

UNITY is only the common ground of our existence
And its self-expanding back-drop,
The vital element is the diversity,
The multiplicity,
The City with its criss-cross streets,
Its high-rise buildings,
The far-off hills,
The sea-front,
Children playing in the sand,
Armies devastating the cities,
Desecrating the places of worship,
Chasing women carrying their unborn,
And ten thousand other things
Small, insignificant, invisible, looming large—
Is this all a fast-moving sea of multi-visaged energy?
The sweep of a dancer's hand?
The swirling movements of her feet and the skirt?
Who impels this move?
Who bears the shock of the sudden crescendo,
Its all-scattering fall?
Who knows the meaning of it all?

2

The one is its own ground,
Its own sky,
Its own body,
Its own Consort,
Its own womb
Of ten thousand seeds of life
And their promise of full heaven-radiant glory.
O, the ecstasy of being One and the All!

JAYANTILAL PAREKH

LABOUR OF LOVE

by

HUTA

(Continued from the issue of July 1991)

I SHOWED the Mother my new canvas boards. A sudden light shone in her eyes when she said:

“Oh! but on these boards you can compose many things.”

So far I had painted just a single object on a small board, now the Mother wanted me to paint several things on a single board.

She was full of tact.

On 25th February 1957 she sent me papaya, orange, apple, cucumber, tomato and a small fruit along with her sketch and explanatory letter:

“I am sending you the fruits to be painted on a pale green background. The line of the table or stool must be marked as on the sketch I have made to show you how to arrange fruits. I hope you’ll be able to reproduce it.

The fruits will easily keep for two days if you arrange them on a plank and cover them with a cloth when you are not working.

I have put a frame line showing the proportion of the fruits with the whole picture. Of course your picture must be bigger than my sketch. You can use a canvas board like the one you brought yesterday.

You can make the first drawing and show it to me this afternoon.”

This was done.

After two days she saw the complete work. She looked at me with an appreciative twinkle in her eyes as she said:

“O child, it is excellent! This very morning I questioned myself whether this girl was born an artist. I had seen the whole painting in my vision before you showed it to me. The shine you have given on the tomato by a sharp stroke of white colour impressed me a lot! I had not been sure whether you would give the final finishing touch. But you did it! I am really very happy with the painting.”

The Mother could not keep her happiness to herself. So she sang my praise to some people:

“The girl is doing such luminous things!”

During that time the Mother spoke about me to Gauri Bhattacharya who was looking after the Mother’s room at the Playground and attending to her needs. These were the Mother’s words:

“Elle a quelque chose de très gentil en elle. Je vais sortir ça.”

Gauri’s translation:

“She has something very nice in her and I am going to bring it out.”

I was pleased that this painting is also kept with my other paintings in the room where Sri Aurobindo and the Mother used to give Darshan to people four times a year.

*

The Mother sent me her Egyptian crown to paint. I did so. She liked the result. Then she revealed:

“Ah, but you know that I have features like an Egyptian!”

She wanted me to draw her portrait with the crown.

I found her photograph in the Japanese dress—*Kimono*—and sketched her face. When she saw it, she said:

“Well, eyes, lips and nose are not correct. Do you mind if I alter the drawing?”

I did not object.

The Mother took out a hand-mirror from the glass-box painted and sent by my younger sister Usha from East Africa.

The Mother gazed at her reflection in the mirror. It was a very pleasant sight to watch the Mother do her own portrait with so much concentration and serenity. Time and again her lips were touched by an enigmatic smile. After finishing it and handing the sheet of paper to me she said:

“Voilà! the Supreme Mother herself came and showed her face. In this picture dwells my soul and I give it to you. Indeed, you are a very lucky girl!”

We looked at each other. Mostly we expressed our inner feeling through our eyes. Mere words were not adequate

*

I did not laze My other interest was to make the Mother's dresses. When I offered them to her, she saw each stitch with a magnifying glass. So I was very particular to sew evenly, accurately.

*

I went to the Meditation Hall upstairs. Krishnalal and Jayantilal were already there.

The Mother came in and then entered the Darshan Room where many paintings of mine were hung She chose fifteen to be exhibited on 15th August 1957

She explained to the artists how the paintings should be arranged—especially three among them:—Kwannon, a white Dahlia and a white Chrysanthemum. She emphasised that they should be put separately and underneath them should be the words.

“These are meant for concentration.”

The Mother declared open the Exhibition of paintings and photographs at 4 p.m.

My paintings occupied one whole wall and only three paintings of mine were kept on the side-wall as the Mother had instructed.

Our eyes met—we exchanged smiles

Later the Mother's doctor Dr. Sanyal informed me:

“Huta, Mother told me after the exhibition: ‘The paintings in the front hall are of my student.’ ”

My Divine Teacher was proud of me. I too was proud of Her, because she had been a renowned painter in Paris.

On 15th September 1956 when the Mother called me in the Meditation Hall upstairs to see all her paintings, she specifically pointed at the superb composition of black and green grapes, other fruits, pots and a glass She said with delight:

“Ah, you see, I won the first prize for this painting in Paris ”

I am extremely fortunate to have been taught her own technique from

scratch. For, when I came to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, I did not know how to draw even a straight line!

*

The month of October was very busy for me. The Mother wished to exhibit her rare collection of Indian handicrafts and other exquisite objects in the Exhibition Hall. In the Mother's private Stores I was cleaning them carefully for the purpose.

On 28th October Dyuman and I with the help of Krishnalal and Jayantilal carried from the Stores numerous things to the Meditation Hall upstairs.

It took the Mother three days to choose from among the various things.

Again we carried all the things back to the Stores and separated them from what were to be displayed in the Exhibition Hall.

We gradually transferred from the Stores the objects selected by the Mother, and started arranging them in the Exhibition Hall.

Krishnalal, Jayantilal, Lakshmi and myself were organising everything. Meanwhile, Lakshmi was suddenly taken ill; so in addition to my work her share fell on me. Of course there were helpers but the right display of things depended on me.

On 24th November in the afternoon the Mother saw the exposition. She was very happy and expressed her satisfaction.

When she left the place, I saw her blue-grey eyes sweep over me briefly but with all-embracing love.

The following morning a beautiful card came from the Mother, depicting many coloured flowers—Gazania—“seeking for clarity—like to say clearly what has to be said”. She had written on it:

“To my dear little child Huta

In appreciation of her so excellent work and artistic taste.

With all my love, steady cheerfulness, quiet strength and sweet compassion.

*

On 14th December I painted a Dahlia of an orange-yellow hue. The significance given to the flower by the Mother was: “Supramentalised Mental Dignity—Tolerates no pettiness in its thought turned towards the Truth.”

The Mother looked at my work minutely and asked:

“Child, I wonder how you did the background. Tell me, did you paint it before or after, because it is simply wonderful.”

I answered: "Mother, to tell you the truth, I myself do not know how the painting was done."

She remarked:

"You are very clever."

After a couple of years this painting was printed. She wrote its message thus:

"Nobility of thought, feeling and action is the true aristocracy."

She used the reproduction as a Christmas and New year card.

On the 19th I painted Chrysanthemums and white Dahlias.

After regarding the picture, the Mother held my hands and said with enthusiasm:

"Child, we shall express the Supramental Truth through painting."

At that very instant a prayer surged spontaneously in my heart and I said: "O Mother, let your will be done." She pressed my hands and affirmed forcefully:

"Yes."

I did not realise at that moment what I had bubbled out. But later at night I became aware and chided myself: "Fool, do you think that to express the Supreme Truth is an easy thing? Stupid, the Mother was talking about the higher and occult things. You have to live that Truth first."

Tears rolled unchecked down my cheeks. I knew, and knew it perfectly well, that it was impossible for me to express anything—to create anything new. I was incapable, hopeless. Panic fluttered in my whole being like the beating of a thousand frenzied wings. A series of thoughts swarmed into my brain and vibrated intensely. Sleep was elusive, my mind too active and I was very conscious of my imperfections.

The succeeding morning of the 20th I received a big professional easel from England. It was taken to the Meditation Hall upstairs. The Mother's eyes widened when she saw the easel. She examined it meticulously and was satisfied.

Then she took her seat in one of the chairs which were against the wall on the right side of her high-backed carved chair. She asked me to sit on a chair beside her. I did not sit there. I sat near her feet.

She took my hands into hers and went into a profound meditation, I thought it never-ending. It lasted more than an hour. I was completely indrawn, feeling

within me a comforting peace and deep silence. Then suddenly I was startled. The Mother slapped my hands very hard. Instantly I opened my eyes and looked at her inquiringly. She leaned from the chair, caressed my hands tenderly, joined them and said soothingly:

“Do not be alarmed, my child, I have now filled your hands with consciousness, light, force and skill.”

Then she gazed intently at my hands for a few seconds and patted them once again.

The wonderful boon she gave me was no fantasy or imagination, but a reality. She definitely did something to my hands of which I was unaware.

*

It happened that as a rule I finished paintings in the morning and sent them to the Mother, and received her written comments. Here are some of them:

“Both paintings are *very good*—the white roses are truly charming.”

“It is an excellent painting. The harmony of colour is excellent and the technique also.”

“It is a very pretty picture with fine technique and well composed.”

“It is excellent and the dark background is very effective.”

“This is truly pretty with a *very nice feeling* about it.”

“You have done exactly what was suggested and perfectly well. The picture is indeed very, very good—Bravo!”

“It is a good attempt—continue and you are sure to succeed fully.”

“The expression is very pretty and the scale of colour is good—suppleness and freedom in execution is required. It is bound to come by doing.”

“This is excellent. The inspiration is coming back.”

Her encouragement, support, appreciation were interminable.

*

It was the last day of the year 1957. In the evening when I entered the Mother's room in the Playground, she asked me:

“Child, what do you want from me for the New Year?”

At that very minute the clock started to strike musically—for it was 6 p.m. She drew my attention to the chiming of the clock. I replied: “Mother, I want to be your true child.” She said with force.

“Granted.”

Precisely that moment the last stroke of 6 p.m. rang. According to the Mother, number six means “New Creation.”

Thus the Year came to an end.

(To be continued)

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THE BUTTONS

AN INFORMAL TALK BY MEDHANANDA

A FEW years before I came to Sri Aurobindo's Ashram, I had an experience. The great Mother led me into the immense hall of grey matter—a sort of cathedral of electronic communication within the brain—and she showed me all the buttons: “You see, if you press this button all the doors of the mind and the senses close—then you can meditate.” I begged her, “Mother, I don't want knowledge or wisdom...there's only one button that really interests me: the button for bliss.” She showed it to me. Since then I have always been able to press it whenever I wanted to. It is a *siddhi*. After a certain period of practice, one no longer has the feeling of a button: it is more like a different way of being which is always available to us, or another dimension of consciousness which one can easily enter.

To speak of “buttons” for psychological exercises implies the simplest possible movement: you press the button, and you get the result. This immediacy is the exact opposite of all religious promises, which are always for the future and the beyond. It is really the most elementary movement of consciousness and requires very little energy. It is not even something you have to do. Instead of pursuing austerities that take years, you press the button.

In this case the button is the one that cuts the connection with the ego, the *ahamkara*, the sense of being separate. Cut free, liberated, at least for a moment, from this separate self, we are offered plenty of opportunities where very simple but fundamental things are revealed to us.

Since we no longer relate every happening in the universe to our own little separate personality, we begin to truly enjoy it. It rains, and we no longer see the rain in relation to personal plans that it interferes with. Now it is related to a whole world of happiness and delight all around us; the bliss of the raindrops, the clouds, the plants can enter us.

Human beings are so used to relating everything to themselves that this state of liberation and bliss does not last long. But we can repeat it: by pressing on the button we can cut the link with the sense of separate self again and again...that means, put ourselves once more on the level of the bliss-vibration.

Shankaracharya's book *Vivekachudamani* begins with the words, “I prostrate myself before Govinda, who is the very essence of bliss.” Most people who read this book think that this is just an Indian formula, a way of expressing gratitude to his guru. They don't understand that in his book, which so often mentions the Ocean of Bliss, this attitude is the secret. In the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna, the poor ego which feels completely cut off and alone, has the same attitude towards Sri Krishna, the centre of his individual formation, the driver of the chariot of his life. Then we understand why one prostrates himself to the

other. In a certain sense his prostration is to himself, the small self's to the great Self. The prostration is to the bliss-button.

If we draw every breath consciously, and this breathing is no longer bound to an ego but instead a movement of eternal becoming, then we don't need a button any more. The breathing is the button. And this is true of everything: an encounter with the moon, or with a landscape or a hieroglyph, can become a door to bliss. These are all buttons. When we are integrated into the All, when we belong only to the All, we don't need to press a button—we ourselves are the button connected to the bliss of the universe.

Nevertheless, one is not entirely in possession of bliss as long as one cannot bring it down at will into the physical body. As we have seen, from the moment we are no longer bound to the ego, we are the Self; and the Self is linked to the All, which is full to the brim with bliss. So the physical body, which is something necessarily separated, is not very suitable to receive it. Not only does it very quickly get tired of the vibration of bliss, it runs the risk that its individual formation may get broken. One solution would require the cessation of the sense of separate self, while keeping the possibility of playing with an individual physical body. Sri Aurobindo worked for years on this problem, which he called "bringing Sri Krishna into the physical". One can see clearly from the record of his exercises and experiences that he was constantly having to start bringing it down afresh into the house of the body.

He even succeeded in maintaining the basis of bliss when a scorpion stung him. This is a problem which the ancient Egyptians considered, and to which they started to see a solution. They tell the story of Re, the awareness of the supreme Self, who when stung by a scorpion must remember his secret name—which is not the body, the small self, but the great Self, of which Jesus said, "I and my great Self are One." And as he remembered it, the pain of the scorpion-sting vanished.

Sri Aurobindo practised remaining in the house of the body—that is, within a limited formation, a sort of ego, but one which should not feel separated and should learn to bear bliss. For that, Sri Krishna himself had to become the house that the great Mother had created for him, had to be the centre of this house—that means the guide of its destiny, the charioteer of the Bhagavad Gita—and be the very reason for the existence of a house, a physical body. While the slightest ego-sense separates us from the universe, the presence of Sri Krishna connects the house to the universe, and bliss can be established in the body. This was the triumph of November 24th, 1926.

A few months later, the world's greatest physicists, meeting in Copenhagen, unanimously acknowledged the vibratory nature of matter. So matter, being vibratory, was fundamentally able to enter into resonance with bliss, which is also vibratory. The discovery of what became known as "Quantum Mechanics"—which dates back three generations now—has not yet penetrated the human

way of perceiving and being, much less the education we offer to our children.

The program that has been set for me, as far as bliss is concerned, is “medhananda”; and it is not limited to a single life. It is bliss in the mind. This doesn’t mean that I cannot know the other forms of bliss; but to taste ananda in the mind is particularly difficult, because the analytic mind is the main root of the ego. Nature has taken great pains over millions of years to produce it, and it certainly has a very important role to play; but it is an instrument of separation, of division, and to teach it to know the bliss of union is not an easy task. Because of my tendency to perceive bliss under every disguise, it is possible for me. The condition is always the same: the absence of any movement of ego. You press the button, you stop being an ego, and then the mental too—if it doesn’t disappear along with the ego—can escape from its isolation, rejoice and blossom in the only reality of the universe: ananda.

The fundamental law of bliss is expressed in the Hindu formula ‘sachchidananda’. To think that Being can exist without self-awareness and without bliss, or that bliss can exist without self-awareness and without Being, is an error to be avoided at all costs if we want to become a yogi or a philosopher. Only Being, with all that it implies of self-awareness and bliss, is, has been and always shall be—as was realised already by the pre-socratic Greek philosophers, particularly Parmenides, whom Plato called ‘the Great’.

What I mean to convey with this expression “pressing a button is enough to bring one into bliss”, is that the bliss is always there. We live in a universe which is Sachchidananda. To live in ananda is the normal state of consciousness, and not, as the religions proclaim, an exceptional state which has to be reached by acrobatic exercises. The more we take these acrobatics seriously, the more we reinforce the ego-sense which cuts us off from bliss. But in reality, ananda doesn’t have to be conquered...in order to find it, we must only separate ourselves from the separation.

Sachchidananda is our natural and eternal state. So all that has to be done, as Shankaracharya’s preface hints, is to prostrate ourselves before our natural state. If humanity wants to succeed in its attempt to live in Paradise on earth, it is indispensable that Being, Consciousness and Bliss should be all of one piece, with no gap, no break, no cut that would be the effect of the analytic mind. This three-in-one, in which oneness is dominant, is the Ariadne’s thread which enables us to escape from the labyrinth that the analytic mind’s sense of separation imposes on us. In the labyrinth everything is separated. Otherwise, everything is so simple!

MEDHANANDA

“SATYAVAN MUST DIE”

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

(Continued from the issue of July 1991)

15: Dawn after Dawn

DAWN after great spiritual dawn has broken goldenly bright in the sky above this earth pouring her splendours. The goddess has come, again and again, bringing in sudden bursts of revelations, rich abundances of heaven. Daughter of Infinity, bearing the supernal birth, she offered to this sorrowing mortality a life of completer joy, in her own figure of love and beauty, her sweetness. She hewed the path of the eternal Day leading the world, in a swift luminous movement, to the realms of Light; she heralded in the wake of an iridescent glory plenitudes of the radiant Truth; cleaving the darkness and standing like a marvel of the unseen magnanimity above aspiration's topaz-hued peaks she, an embodiment of the manifesting gleam, appeared gracious and splendid, ready with gifts of the divine suns. But so magical and so fiery the Wonder that no light stayed too long. The afflatus from across the silver horizons rushed with all its happy transforming benevolences, but soon went back like a vision disappearing into the secrecy of its sight. The miraculous awakening beam touched the slumbering creature, and once more withdrew, like music into deeps of calm, the incarnation's mystery.

This earth seems in love with her ignorance and with her suffering and the thousandfold misery. The hands that bring succour to her are seized and tied on the sun-burning beaches of time to the heavy monster rock. All that is benign and heavenly, noble and precious, graceful and charming, is appropriated or snatched or plundered and put to servitude's uncouth and awesome use. Never was the full glory, the marvel of the unfading ray, allowed to establish itself in this earthly life's squalor and sordidness. The Deity of the Darkness would not permit it and the hesitant sunward-curving path would be mutilated and even destroyed. The long history of the earth has been a record, a frightening scroll, of the failure of the spiritual attempts to change the plight of this death-seized humanity.

The Avatars have lived and died in vain,
Vain was the sage's thought, the prophet's voice;
In vain is seen the shining upward Way.¹

These great exceptional souls bore the ignominy of mortal life and watered the green and golden Tree of Knowledge-and-Beauty-and-Delight; but ever it produced, in the grey earthly soil, the sombre fruits of evil and falsehood. These

God’s heroes and warriors came and suffered, and went back, with no trophy in their hand. Maybe something was done, some advance made each time, but the tale has always been one of sorrow, anguish, perdition, hell-fires. None could succeed in wiping tears from the eyes of the earth though a few might have entered into the beatitude of the Elsewhere. It looks as though all was nothing or vainly achieved here. The misfortune of the fallen race cannot be told even with a “hundred tongues and a hundred iron throats”—tells the guide of Aeneas as he moves in the lower world. A river running fire, Phlegethon’s torrent, irrigates the fields of this wretched life. Rhadamanthus punishes guilt, Tisiphone leaps with her scourge and with her serpents as whips of menace. “Seeds of flame hidden in veins of flint” always sprout in their devastating numbers while the fifty marriage-chambers, with proud hopes of an everlasting line, lie buried in the ruins of savage Time. Even after the War of Kurukshetra, the great war fought by the Avatar to uphold the eternal Dharma, what is witnessed is the sea of blood flowing from the butchery of Ashwatthama. Carthage is in flames and Paris shall be destroyed—roars the implacable Spirit of Destruction.

If these hell-fires were to burn over there in Purgatory, for ever only in an eternity of darkness, perhaps they would not have mattered, nor would have the oceans of nectar if they were to flood merely the heavens of the day-makers. But the nodus is the soul of the earth who is the helpless sufferer and as much the enjoyer of these worlds; it is he who is afflicted with deep inner wounds that are painfully difficult to heal; it is he who attempts to escape from the terrestrial bonds for a celestial blessedness. “Make me immortal in that realm where dwells the King, Vivasvan’s Son, where is the secret shrine of heaven, where are those waters young and fresh,”—cried the Vedic Rishi.²

Agastya had tried digging and levelling the ground, darksome and fearful, that in these well-prepared and well-furrowed lands might bloom the trees of Paradise, that they might yield rich fruits of a joyous immortality. Though in that arduous and pioneering task he received the blessings of the gods, he found the body to be susceptible and affected by three poisons—*kankat*, *akankat*, and *jalakankat*—as well as by the poison that is not visible. He prayed to the luminous son of Aditi to appear and destroy them; he solicited him to extend the treasures and bounties of his own bright dazzling person to mankind. But the honey-lore could not be held in the earthen jar. Too brittle was the vase to bear the touch of that light and that delight; it was not fully baked, it was *atapta*. The Yoga of Agastya shall therefore continue again; his hymn

उदपप्तदसौ सूर्यः पुरु विश्वानि जूर्वन् ।
आदित्यः पर्वतेभ्यो विश्वदृष्टो अदृष्टहा ॥

shall once more be addressed to the Deity of the Golden Light.

Vamadeva had three dreams and he declared: “This is my habitation and

this is my habitation and this is my habitation.” While still in his mother’s womb he knew his three births. In a hundred cities of iron they held him down and kept him chained; but he broke through them and, with speed and violence, soared like a hawk to the highest Heaven. He soared forth into yonder world of Paradise and, having possessed all desires, put Death behind. In the father was his first birth, in the mother the second, and in the work of sacrifice he had come to do was his third birth; in the transcendent Purusha, in the universal Prakriti, and in the process of evolution was he triply born. By fulfilling the Yajna of the Earth Vamadeva established foundations of his immortality in Wisdom. He came to know that whatsoever is is guided by Wisdom.⁴

By austere practices in the Yoga of Meditation, and by the grace of the supreme Lord, Shwetashwatara received the knowledge of the eternal Self. He saw the great sun-hued Person, *puruṣam mahāntam ādityavarnam*, and crossed on to the realms of solar illumination. Of that Person he declared to the renouncers of the worldly life: “By this knowledge the soul passeth beyond the pursuit of Death and there is no other road for the great passage.”

वेदाहमेतं पुरुषं महान्तमादित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् ।
तमेव विदित्वाति मृत्युमेति नान्यः पन्था विद्यतेऽयनाय ॥

Leaving Death aside the Rishi ascended to the immutable heaven of soul-bliss, where a “sky of soul covered a deep soul-ground”.

But the soul’s great release did not satisfy Aswapathy. He saw through the long eternity of Time innumerable dawns coming and going without bringing ever the light of the Day to this grief-stricken earth. The promised millennium always seemed to recede to distant ages. But Aswapathy heard the call of the Seer within and moved towards an indiscernible end, climbing to the “bare summit of created things”. He bore the “burden of the world’s desire” and voyaged through wide expanding cosmic spaces inhabited by beings of various kinds and types. Stepping first into a world of lovelier forms he was enchanted by them; but he realised that there only the physical gods are kings. Next in the hierarchy, he saw the thousand Edens created by the Life-force; but he also witnessed how a dark Presence stunned her and challenged her when she tried to enter into the terrestrial scene with her gifts. She was overpowered and unrecognisably corrupted. In the process were born pain, suffering, evil, falsehood, death—their whole brood in countless numbers indeed. What could have been God’s beautiful creation got disfigured, became ugly, repulsive, and the spirit’s music turned into a multi-voiced “illusion’s ode”. The Sphinx of the Fable stared with blood-red eyes at the wayfarer. Death has now become the Lord of Life on this Earth.

However, Aswapathy did not pause at this point. Continuing his endless Odyssey, he climbed to the worlds of Mind and to the worlds of the Gods. But he

discovered that they, happy in their dominions, had no power to resuscitate life from her fallen state. Aswapathy was seized by the desire that the cause of this world-failure must be hunted out and eliminated. Soon he realised that it is only by invoking the supreme Might that the solution could be found. He stood, with a prayerful heart, on the austere peaks of heaven, looking into the utter Transcendent and hoping to receive a fulfilling answer. Suddenly emerging from the Unknowable a marvellous figure, “a Bliss, a Light, a Power, a flame-white Love” appeared like a gracious Vision filling the spaces of his soul. She advised him not to invoke, in impatience, the immeasurable Descent, but suggested rather that the evolutionary track be left to itself to run its own slow and natural course. To raise a new creation, to lift up man from this earth-bound and inconscience-permeated and ignorance-hedged state is an extremely dangerous game and the issue should not be forced. She even indicated that the time for such a transformation was not opportune and that the “Dragon of the dark foundations” should not be aroused or stirred too early. Aswapathy was to continue his spirit’s work to help humanity’s “blind and suffering life”. But he could not remain content with Doom ever prevailing around. The ardent and sincere evocative cry of his heart to the gracious Mother, the Adya Shakti, was that the insoluble Enigma be tackled by her own self taking birth in creation; only her incarnate Force could conquer Death. Aswapathy’s prayer gains an answer, affirmatively paving the way for the eternal Day’s marvellous dawn.

Fate’s working in the Creation is an anomaly which has occurred because of the infinite possibilities that are allowed to go to their extremest end in a free play of the manifesting Delight. Creation arising, rather emerging, out of the Inconscience is one possibility of that Unknowable’s omnipotence which, in order to exhaust it, must be granted its full scope or chance. Fate, the inconscient Force in her dynamical operation, is the means for that possibility’s materialisation. The play is indeed full and all-comprehensive—and real. The Adversary has a definite role in existence wherein the Fall of God becomes the first necessary starting point for God’s own victory. The fallen Being disappears into his own Self of Bliss. For this Being to reappear, for the “joyous miracle” spoken of by Christianity to occur, the marvellous dawn of the eternal Day which Aswapathy foresaw must now flush the earthly sky. The boon of the divine Mother is an assurance towards that. She even fixes the whole methodology for this accomplishment:

One shall descend and break the iron Law,
Change Nature’s doom by the lone Spirit’s power...
She shall bear Wisdom in her voiceless bosom,
Strength shall be with her like a conqueror’s sword
And from her eyes the Eternal’s bliss shall gaze.
A seed shall be sown in Death’s tremendous hour,

A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;
Nature shall overleap her mortal step;
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will.⁶

The boon that Aswapathy has received will be passed on in its millionfold glory to all mankind. What was a slow and natural course of evolution will now be hastened like the miracle of a temple-tower climbing with God-speed to the invisible heaven. In a wide and sure spiritual control the Rule of Darkness shall be abrogated.

Accepting the circumstance of Time, Fate, Chance, Death, the divine Mother takes birth as Aswapathy's daughter. Then espousing Love she does, to prepare herself for the "tremendous hour", the Shakti-Yoga in the earth-consciousness; her intense and arduous sadhana is the founding of the occult path leading towards transformation. Indeed, it is to meet and join her Lord in the House of Matter that she fronts the danger of the inconscient Unknowable. Death's hour is now at hand and she must reveal her conquering divinity to dissolve that sombre Mystery. Not just the "intrusion on the vacancy of Inconscience" does this Arrival represent as a symbol Dawn; it is the definitive seeding of the life divine here. The *amāvasyā*-noon of the month of Jeshtha marks that tremendous hour when Satyavan must die. This death is therefore not only a part of the Divine Decision incorporated in the Boon itself, it is the finest that can be bestowed on the earth. In it is the new Birth. In it is the beginning of immortality's terrestrial unfoldment. In it is the Next Future. Satyavan must die—that is the most prized boon offered by the Adya Shakti for the birth of a new Satyavan. A marvellous Dawn is ushered with it.

(Concluded)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

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SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of July 1991)

IN Baroda state Sri Aurobindo, in spite of the cog-wheel of administrative work, was fitted to become an apt professor. Teaching was his *Swadharna*. The impressions of a few students of Baroda College and his voluminous correspondence with his disciples throw light on his proficiency as a teacher. He was extraordinary in that role. He confided to A. B. Purani: "I was not so conscientious a professor as [my brother] Manmohan. I never used to look at the notes and sometimes my explanations did not agree with them at all. I was professor of English and sometimes of French. What was surprising to me was that students used to take down everything verbatim and mug it up by heart. Such a thing would never have happened in England. There (at Baroda) the students besides taking my notes used to get notes of some professors from Bombay, especially if any of them was to be an examiner."¹

Again Sri Aurobindo recalls: "Once I was giving a lecture on Southey's *Life of Nelson*. My lecture was not in agreement with the notes. So the students remarked that it was not at all like what was found in the notes. I replied: I have not read the notes—in any case they are all rubbish: I could never go to the minute details. I read and left my mind to do what it could. That is why I could never become a scholar. Up to the age of fifteen I was known as a very promising scholar in St. Paul's. After fifteen I lost that reputation. The teachers used to say that I had become lazy and was deteriorating—because I was reading novels and poetry only; at examination time I used to prepare a little. But now and then when I wrote Greek and Latin verse my teachers used to lament that I was not utilising my remarkable gifts because of my laziness."²

K. M. Munshi, a leading politician, who was Sri Aurobindo's student in 1903, has eloquently testified to his teacher's tremendous hold on the undergraduates. He records: "My own contact with Sri Aurobindo dated back to 1902 when after passing the Matriculation examination, I joined the Baroda College. Though previously I had only on one occasion the privilege of being in personal contact with him, the Aurobindonian legend in the College filled me with reverence, and it was with awe that I hung upon his words whenever he came to College as Professor of English."³

We can get an idea of Sri Aurobindo's talents as a teacher from his student R. N. Patkar: "...When I came to Baroda—I was a school-going lad hardly sixteen in age and as such I cannot be expected to give a detailed account of [Sri Aurobindo's] life during this short period. However, I note down a few points that struck me and made a vivid impression on me.. ."⁴

"...I had the good fortune to be his student when I was in the Intermediate Class. His method of teaching was a novel one. In the beginning he used to give a

series of introductory lectures for initiating the student into the subject-matter of the text, which gave a fair idea about the author and his views on particular items bearing on the text. After preparing the student to understand the text in this manner, he used to start reading the text in the classroom, stopping whenever necessary to explain the meaning of difficult and obscure sentences. Then after finishing the text, he used to dictate general lectures bearing on the various aspects pertaining to the text. These lectures, which were given at the close of the term, were availed of by many students belonging to the other colleges.”⁵

Patkar writes further: “I once asked him how I should improve my English, what authors I should read and study. I had read some portion of Macaulay’s *Lives of Great Men* and I was fascinated by his style. I asked him if I should read Macaulay. Then, as was usual with him, he smiled and replied, ‘Do not be anybody’s slave, but be your own master. By reading Macaulay or any other writer you will never be like him. You will not be a Macaulay but a faint echo of Macaulay. You will but be a copy to be derided by the world, but never an original. Therefore you may read any good author carefully, but should think for yourself and form your own judgment. It is likely you may differ from the views of the writer. You should think for yourself and cultivate a habit of writing and in this way you will be the master of your style’.”⁶

His friends and relations, his colleagues and pupils, who came into close contact with him, at least some of them were conscious also of the power behind the person, the fire that seemed to burn within, the light that shone in the eyes. Later Dr. C. R. Reddy who succeeded Sri Aurobindo as vice-principal of the Baroda College, has left this record:

“I had the honour of knowing him. We had a number of friends in common. Mr. A. B. Clark, the Principal of the Baroda College remarked to me, ‘So you met Aurobindo Ghose. Did you notice his eyes? There is a mystic fire and light in them. They penetrate into the beyond. If Joan of Arc heard heavenly voices, Aurobindo probably sees heavenly visions’ ”⁷

From Pannikar’s records it is found that Sri Aurobindo led a simple life. He narrates: “He was remarkably simple in his mode of living. He was not at all fastidious in his tastes. He did not seem to care much either for his food or dress, because he never attached any importance to either.... At home he was clad in plain white sadara and dhoti and outside invariably in white drill suits. He never slept on a soft cotton-bed, as most of us do, but on a bed made of coir (coconut fibres) on which was spread a Malabar grass mat which served as a bed-sheet. Once I asked him why he used such a coarse hard bed and he said with his characteristic laugh, ‘My boy, don’t you know that I am a Brahmachari? Our *shastras* enjoin that a Brahmachari should not use a soft bed, which may induce him to sleep.’ I was silenced but I thought to myself that he must be a great man...”⁸

“Another important thing I observed about him, was his total absence of

love for money, for which he never seemed to care. We all knew that he was working as Professor of English Literature in the Baroda College. He was getting a decent salary of Rs. 500 a month. It was his practice to receive his salary once in three months. In those days payment was made in cash and not in currency notes as now. He used to get the lump sum for the three months in a bag which he emptied in a large tray lying on the table in his room. He never bothered to keep it in a safe box, under lock and key as most of us do, and it lay there open until it was consumed. He never cared to keep an account of what he spent. This struck me and one day I casually asked him why he kept his money like that. He simply laughed and I still remember—though after a lapse of over fifty years—the reply that was given by him. He said, ‘Well, it is a proof that we are living in the midst of honest and good people.’ I asked him again, ‘You never keep any account which may testify to the honesty of the people round about you?’ Then with a serene face he said, ‘It is God who keeps an account for me. He gives me as much as I want and keeps the rest to Himself. At any rate He does not keep me in want; then why should I worry?’ ”⁹

Sri Aurobindo was famous not only for his lectures in the college but also as a fine speaker. Mr. Patkar further says: “But more than his college lectures, it was a treat to hear him on the platform. He used to preside occasionally over the meetings of the College Debating Society. When he was to preside, the College Central Hall which is sufficiently large was almost packed to the full with the audience which not only consisted of the College Students but many educated persons from the outside public especially when the subject selected for the debate was interesting. Mr. Ghose was never an orator but a speaker of a very high order, and when he rose to speak, there was a pin-drop silence and the audience used to listen to him with rapt attention. Without any gestures or movements of the limbs, he stood like a statue—motionless—and the language used to flow like a stream from his lips with a natural ease and melody that kept his audience almost spell-bound. Every sentence that he uttered was full of meaning and set the audience thinking for days together.”¹⁰

He was a voracious reader. His passion for reading was thrown into relief by his cousin Basanti Devi. When Sri Aurobindo used to visit Bengal he carried a lot of books with him. She has remarked: “Auro Dada used to arrive with two or three trunks. We always thought they would contain costly suits and other luxury items like scents, etc. When he opened them I used to look and wonder. What is this? A few ordinary clothes and all the rest books and nothing but books! Does Auro Dada like to read all these? We all want to chat and enjoy ourselves in vacations. Does he want to spend even this time in reading these books? But because he liked this reading did not mean that he did not join us in our talks and chats and our merry making. His talks used to be full of wit and humour.”¹¹

Sri Aurobindo began an intensive study of languages and literature. He had studied deeply and gained mastery over European literature and culture, but he

did not know much of his own country's culture, heritage, religion and civilization. So he started to read about them:

"He concentrated on Sanskrit and Bengali, but also learned a little Gujarati and Marathi (the two languages of the Baroda state, where he was serving), and also a certain amount of Hindi. At first it was India's rich secular literature that attracted him. He read and translated into English passages from the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, and classical writers such as Kalidasa. In Bengali it was to Bankimchandra and Madhusudan Dutt that his attention was chiefly turned although he also read and translated India's mediaeval poets such as Chandidasa. Later he became more interested in India's spiritual heritage and read the *Gita* and *Upanishads* in the original Sanskrit (translating much of what he read into English) and also examined the primary source of Indian Culture, 'the fount of our philosophies', the bedrock of our religions, the kernel of our civilisation, the rivet of our Nationality. .Veda."¹²

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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MEGHADŪTA: A STUDY OF THE INTERPLAY OF “DARK” AND “BRIGHT” IMAGES

(Continued from the issue of July 1991)

(A) Imagery in the Narrative-Descriptive Passage

(i) Narrative Passage

THIS passage, as we have noted, gives only the skeletal frame of the poem. Nevertheless, from the metaphorical standpoint we find a few important indicators. In the opening verse Kālidāsa uses the expression *aṣṭam-gamita-mahimā*, “one whose glory has been made to set or decline”, to qualify the Yakṣa. Both *aṣṭam-gam* “to set, to decline” closely associated to the sun and *mahimā* “glory, greatness” which points to the former exalted status of the Yakṣa, evoke the image of a divine being who has lost his lustre. In the next verse, too, there is a similar suggestion, *dhvani*:

*abalā-viprayuktaḥ sa kāmī...kanaka-valaya-bhramśa-rikta-prako-
sṭhaḥ*

the lover separated from his wife...he whose arms are naked through the falling of the golden bracelets.

Critics have noted the suggestion of this image, namely that it conveys the idea that the Yakṣa has become emaciated due to the pangs of separation, *viraha-duḥkhāt kṛśaḥ* (Mallinātha). But there is also another *dhvani*. The lover, *sa kāmī*, is separated from the beloved wife, *abalā-viprayuktaḥ*: this finds its parallel in the image of the arm separated from the golden bracelet. The suggestion of Mallinātha explains the use of *valaya* bracelet, but not the use of *kanaka*, gold. “Gold” becomes pregnant with meaning when we reconstitute to it the idea of brightness. The separation from his wife finds metaphorically concrete expression in the falling of brightness that is the golden bracelet.

The brief narrative part fixes with admirable subtlety the symbolism of the “dark” and the “bright”.

(ii) Cloud’s Route

Kālidāsa explicitly tells us that this is a very important part of the poem.¹ And in fact it is here that the metaphorical texture finds its fullest expression.

¹ “*Mārgam tāvac*” quoted earlier

This texture is made up of two different kinds of imagery. In one kind the cloud itself represents the dark aspect and the personification of the lover, and as such occupies a central position in the metaphor. Here the images are directly linked to the theme of union and separation. The Yakṣa often creates images of union, *milana*, so as to demonstrate the poignancy of separation, *viraha*. The other kind of images are either independent of the cloud or else the cloud is not personified; it is an object of nature like any other object, like the bird, or the mountain; here the Yakṣa evokes pictures of “dark” and “bright” as if to create the suitable background for the elaboration of his emotions, which finds its direct expression in the delicately sensuous lyrical passage.

There are five verses in which, in the present context, we can speak of the personification of the cloud. The cloud is the dark lover: in four of the verses a river assumes the role of the beloved woman:¹ and in one the feminine role is assumed by a mountain [25]. In all these images the darkness of the cloud is emphasized in opposition to the brightness of the river or the mountain. The stamp of the metaphor is most powerful here. The comparisons within the images, the details of the pictures evoke intensely at the same time the idea of eroticism, *śṛṅgāra*, and the idea of separation which here finally ends in lovers' meeting. These images also carry too a burden of sadness which becomes poignant as they remind the Yakṣa, in a very sensually concrete manner, of the moments of his happy love. Let us now consider these images:

*veṇī-bhūta-pratanu-salilām tām atitasya sindhum
pāṇḍu-cchāyām tata-ruha-taru-bhramśibhir jīṛṇa-parṇaiḥ/
saubhāgyam te subhaga virahāvasthayā vyañjayantīm
kārśyam yena tyajati vidhinā sa tvayāvopapādyah// [29]*

When you are away the waters of the River almost run dry so that she looks like a thin braid of hair; her complexion grows pale with the yellow leaves fallen from the trees that stand on her banks: such is her lovelorn condition. All this, O happy lover! suggests how fortunate you are. It is now left to you to find out what is to be done to make thinness depart from her body.

In the foreground we see the river; the main traits brought forward are the emaciated form and the colour. Both are results of the pangs of separation. As regards the colour-quality which is our concern, we find the word *pāṇḍu*, which denotes a pale shade of yellow. The yellow-quality is emphasized by *jīṛṇa-parṇa*, old leaves falling from the trees which are mostly yellow. The whole colour-scheme evokes the yellowish pallor of one pining with love. The pallor, in separation, however, suggests that in union the colour is bright. Pallor, as is

¹ [29, 40, 46, 49]

suggested, is only the diminution of brightness. The cloud remains rather in the background. We must always keep in mind that the cloud is dark so as to be able to appreciate and seize the colour-scheme.

In the verse we are going to consider next, the colour-scheme becomes even more prominent. The cloud comes forward into the middle ground:

*gambhīrāyāḥ payasi saritaś cetasīva prasanne
chāyātmāpi prakṛti-subhago lapsyate te praveśam/
tasmāt tasyāḥ kumuda-viśadāny arhasi tvarṇi na dhairyān
moghikartuṁ caṭula-śapharodvartana-prekṣitāni// [40]*

In any case, you, lovely by nature! will find entrance as a reflection in the clear waters of Gambhīrā, as within a loving heart; therefore, you should not, through self-restraint, frustrate her lily-white glances which are like the glittering leaps of restless little carps.

Again the river represents the beloved; the brightness and whiteness are strongly emphasized, first by the word *prasanna*, clear, limpid, bright when related to the water, then the glances of the river which are white like water-lilies; and moreover, these glances are bright because they are nothing but the springing up of the restless silver-scaled *śaphara*, a small carp, the scales of which glisten and reflect the sunlight as it jumps out of the water.

The cloud's colour is made more prominent by the word *chāyā*; the reflection of the cloud on the water is contrasted with the brightness of the water. Here we have the scene of union.

In the third example the cloud too comes to the forefront: the interplay of dark and bright reaches its highest intensity, balance and harmony.

*tvayy ādātum jalam avanate śārṅgiṇo varṇa-caure
tasyāḥ sindhoḥ pṛthum api tanum dūra-bhāvāt pravāham/
prekṣiṣyante gagana-gatayo dūram āvarjya dr̥ṣṭir
ekaṁ muktā-guṇam iva bhuvah sthūla-madhyendranīlam// [46]*

As you bend down to take water from the river, gods moving in the sky will cast their glances down below and see the broad watery stream looking narrow from so far, and on that stream you, the ravisher of Kṛṣṇa's complexion: this will appear to them as Earth's string of pearls with an immense sapphire in the middle.

This recalls in some ways the previous two images. They all show a gradual progression from almost a half-image to the complete crystallization—here the perception has reached the imaginative height of exactness in which there is no

hesitation; it is a 'fully realized image.'¹

The joy of union—for the Yakṣa the aesthetic fulfilment of his desire, the embodiment of the delight and beauty of love he remembers and he hopes to find again when his curse will be ended—is here vividly portrayed; the mental state, *cittavṛtti*, is made visible. The cloud by ravishing the colour of the body of the eternal Lover, Kṛṣṇa, has become itself metaphorically the supreme lover. The perfect union of the dark and bright is splendidly pictured by the image of the sapphire in the string of pearls.

These images show a sustained development of an imaginative truth expressed with precision and clear intellectual control. The development which finally reaches the height of concrete perception proves beyond question that the images of "dark" and "bright" are intended and used with conscious artistry.

There is yet another image in which the cloud-river relation is depicted, but with a different psychological goal. It does not move on the aesthetic emotional level but on the ethical.

*hivā hālām abhimata-rasām revati-locanānkām
bandhu-prītyā samara-vimukho'lāngalī yāḥ siṣevel
krtvā tesam abhugamam apām somya sārāsvatīnām
antah-svacchas tvam aḥi bhavitā varna-mātreṇa kṛṣṇaḥ// [49]*

When Balarāma, the Plough-bearer, turned away from battle for love of his kinsfolk, he resorted to the waters of Sarasvatī, giving up his cherished drink, the intoxicating liquor which mirrored Revati's eyes. You too dear friend reaching those waters will become pure in the heart: your colour alone will remain dark.

A new dimension is added to the metaphor. Love is not just an emotional experience, not eroticism alone, but has also a moral significance. Kālidāsa depicts with vivid sensuousness the beauty and the pleasure of love, but always there is a progressive transformation; he is never content only to show love that ends in the culminating beauty of erotic experience alone. There is a gradual purification of love, as we find it very clearly in Umā's *tapas* and more dramatically in Śakuntalā. Speaking about the latter, Rabindranath Tagore writes that Kālidāsa raises love from the realm of natural beauty, *svabhāva-saundarya*, to the eternal heaven of beauty-in-goodness, *mangala-saundarya*.² It is this ethical aspect of love that is effectively suggested here.

There is one verse in which the counterpart of the cloud is not a river but the mountain Nicais.

¹ H. Coombes, *Literature and Criticism* (Harmondsworth 1965), p. 55

² Vide. Rabindranāth Thākura (Tagore), "Śakuntalā" in *Prācīna Sāhitya* (Calcutta 1907)

*nicair ākhyam girim adhivases tatra viśrāma-hetos—
tvat-samparkāt pulakitam iva prauḍha-puṣpaih kadambaiḥ/
yah paṇya-stri-rati-parimalodgāribhir nāgarānām
uddāmāni prathayati śilā-veśmabhir yauvanāni*/[25]

You should stop to take rest there, on the hill called Nicaïs whose full-blown *kadamba*-flower will be like the bristling of hair at the thrill of your embrace: this hill proclaims the passionate youth of the townsmen by its rocky caverns exhaling the sensuous perfumes of the courtesans.

The bright yellow colour of the full-blown *Kadamba* flowers is set against the blackness of the cloud. We should, however, note a different tone: Kālidāsa suggests here another aspect of love which was an important part of the Indian society in classical times: the love of the courtesans. The idea of venal love is expressed firstly by the name of the mountain, *Nicaïs*, meaning “low”: this is a lower kind of love; and secondly by the description of the mountain caverns exhaling sensual perfume, *ratiparimala*.¹

The second category of images in this section are those which develop the setting with the contrast of “dark” and “bright”. The cloud may be one of the terms, but it is not personified.² The erotic symbolism too is often quite subdued. But because of these images this whole passage gets its unmistakable metaphorical colouring.

The Yakṣa leads the cloud across the splendid landscape over hills and rivers, villages and towns, unfurling a panorama which reveals concretely his mental state. The landscape becomes truly an “inscape.”³ The scenery shows us the beauty and interplay of the encounter between the bright and the dark. The black cloud voyaging through the changing scenes is shown with white birds, creating thus a wonderful contrast, intense and moving. Such scenes are familiar to the Indians and charged with strong emotional associations.⁴

¹ The mountain Nicaïs could also be taken as a male friend, it is often thus interpreted, perhaps because of the grammatical gender of “*giri*”, mountain, which is masculine. The word “*nicais*” is indeclinable. But the grammatical gender need not debar us from taking the mountain metaphorically as feminine.

² In a way, the cloud is personified throughout the poem because of his role as the messenger. What I mean here is that even if we forget this formal personification the images to be considered will not lose anything of their beauty and significance.

³ For the affinities of this concept of Gerard Manley Hopkins and the analysis of *prauḍhā* “as the power of clear visualisation of the aesthetic image which is really the seizure of the object in all its fullness and life,” see Krishna Chaitanya, *Sanskrit Poetics: A Critical and Comparative Study* (London 1965), pp. 217-8.

⁴ The impact that this beauty can make on a sensitive person can be understood from an experience that Rāmakṣṇa had as a child. “One morning,” he recalled in later life, “I took some parched rice in a small basket and was eating while I walked along the narrow ridges of the rice-fields. In one part of the sky, a beautiful black cloud appeared, heavy with rain. I was watching it and eating the rice. Very soon, the cloud covered almost the whole sky. And then a flock of cranes came flying. They were as white as milk against that black cloud. It was so beautiful that I became absorbed in the sight. Then I lost consciousness of everything outward.” Christopher Isherwood, *Ramakṛishna and his Disciples* (Calcutta 1974), pp. 28-9.

Kālidāsa notes such images with great care and precision. When the favourable wind drives the cloud on, the white cranes in the sky will form themselves into a garland which will shine against the black cloud. A lovely sight!

*nyūnam ābaddha-mālāh
seviṣyante nayana-subhagaṃ khe bhabantaṃ balākāḥ*//[10]

the flock of white cranes in the sky will, for sure, become a garland to adorn you who are the delight of their eyes.

Again in a different scene the Yakṣa says that the white swans will be the companions of his journey: *rājahamsāḥ sahāyāḥ* [12]

Various other scenes with glorious hues against the dark cloud are evoked. The rainbow shines like a mixture of the lights of various gems, *ratna-cchāyā-vyatikara iva*, and invests the cloud with incomparable loveliness [15].

A few verses further follows a description, almost supernatural in its beauty, as the poet himself says, a sight fit for the gods:

*channopāntah pariṇata-phala-dyotubhiḥ kānanāmraīs—
tvayy ārūḍhe śikharam acalaḥ snigdha-veṇī-savarṇel
nūnam yāsyaty amara-mithuna-preksaṇīyam avasthām
madhye śyāmaḥ stana iva bhuvah ṣeṣa-vistāra-pāṇḍuh*// [18]

You have the same hue as the black tresses smeared with oil; when you have climbed the summit of the mountain covered on all sides with wild mango-trees, shining with ripe fruits, you will look like the Earth's breast, dark in its centre and bright all around: a sight surely for the divine couples to see.

Many other images intensify this metaphysical texture. The lightning in the cloud is like a gold streak on the black touchstone, *kanaka-nikasa-snigdḥā* [37]. When the cloud, like an elephant, bends down to drink the crystal-clear water of the Gaṅgā, its dark reflection appears like the dark river Yamunā at its confluence with the bright Gaṅgā [51]. When it rests on the tops of snow-clad mountains the cloud's splendour will be comparable to the mud dug out by Śiva's white bull¹:

śobhām ramyāṃ tri-nayana-vṛṣotkhāta-pankopameyām [52]

a splendid loveliness that bears a comparison with the mud that the bull of the three-eyed God digs out.

¹ One may here note the variant reading *śobhām śubhra-tri-nayanavrsothkhāta-pankopameyām*

And finally when the cloud reaches the slopes of the Mount Kailāsa, we find one last picture in which the dark and bright are intricately mingled:

*utpaśyāmi tvayi taṭa-gate snigdha-bhinnāñjanābhe
sadyaḥ-kṛta-dvirada-daśana-ccheda-gaura ya tasya/
līlām adreḥ stimita-nayana-prekṣaṇīyāṁ bhavitrīm
amsa-nyaste sati halabhṛto mecake vāsaśīva// [59]*

You have the sheen of Kohl ground in oil; the mountain is as white as a freshly cut piece of ivory. When you reach its slopes, its beauty, I can well imagine, will be worth looking at with unwavering eyes, like that of Balarāma, the Plough-bearer, with a dark cloak flung on his shoulders

This is a complex image. Firstly, the simple picture of the black cloud resting on the white snowy slopes of Kailāsa. This itself is evocative, but Kālidāsa makes the picture more concrete with a metaphor and a simile: the cloud has the hue of Kohl ground in oil, *snigdha-bhinnāñjanābha*, and the whiteness of the snowy slopes is shining bright like a white piece of ivory¹ which has just been cut. After having strongly made the contrast, the poet puts them together with the help of a simile: the meeting of the two is like a black cloth thrown on the shoulders of Balarāma, who, contrary to his brother Kṛṣṇa, is white. Moreover, this association with Balarāma suggests that blackness is not inauspicious; it is a part of the total universal structure, as has also been pointed out earlier by the image of the Earth's breast.

This texture is seen also in images where the cloud is absent. Rivers, mountains, trees, fruits, flowers, birds, beasts and insects take part in this universal imagination; the world becomes a playground where bright things meet with dark things. We see the mountain Vindhya with its huge dark rocks like black big elephants; the river Revā flowing on the rocks appears like stripes of ashes² on the elephants' bodies—*bhūtim aṅge gajasya* [19]. Elsewhere, the poet paints a wonderful picture of a village where the white *ketaka*-flowers, the rose-apple tree with its dark-blue fruits, the black crows and the white swans are interwoven into a sustained harmony of contrasts.

*pāṇdu cchāyopavana-vṛtayah ketakaiḥ sūci-bhinnair
nīdārambhair grha-bali-bhujām ākula-grāma-caityaḥ/
tvayy āsanne phala-pariṇati-śyāma-jambū-vanāntāḥ
sarṁpatsyante katipaya-dina-sthyāyi-hamsā daśārnāḥ// [23]*

¹ The ivory which is expressed in Sanskrit by *dvirada-daśana*, elephant's tusk, conveys also the contrast between the colour of the elephant and that of its tusk

² *Bhūti* is mostly glossed as “decoration” made on the elephants body with paints. But here the image seems to justify the other meaning of *bhūti*, ashes, which are used to decorate elephants. Mallinātha glosses, *śrngāram iva vā bhaṣmatam iva*

Garden-hedges whitely gleaming with *ketaka*-flowers bursting open at the pointed tips; sacred village-trees vibrant with life as crows build their nests; rose-apple woods dark-blue with fruits ripening; and swans come to stay for a few days:—such will be the beauty of the land of Daśārṇas at your approach.

In order to appreciate the picture one has to take into consideration not only the colour-qualities but the sound, form and other emotional associative qualities as well. Nevertheless, even in our limited field of investigation we see the liveliness and sobriety with which the poet has used the colours.

(To be continued)

RANAJIT SARKAR

WHAT'S IN A SMILE?

YOU'RE greatly mistaken if you think a baby appreciates a good joke when you're making faces and generally acting the fool. What it is responding to is the *open* mouth and the *wide-open* eyes. Curiously enough, these are the very begging signals that an infant uses to obtain food—indeed, his first smile (often with a chomping up and down of the mouth) is a begging for his mother's breast. But it is soon social as well, for the gestalt of the smile is hardwired in us as something eminently desirable, and most of what we accomplish later in life is done with a view to win approbation i.e. smiles. Without this we probably would have been content as a species to eat, sleep and stay clear of danger. Though we are not entirely conscious of this, there is nothing more flattering than to be greeted by this begging signal—for it implies that others have savored our ideas, conversation, performance or beauty.

The kiss also may have derived from a practice, still extant in certain primitive tribes, of mothers' feeding newly weaned babies with masticated food from mouth to mouth. I believe there is an analogy here with the wolf cubs who beg for food from an adult back from the hunt by pawing at and licking his muzzle, inducing him to regurgitate. This is done also by adult wolves (without regurgitated food) as a show of affection (i.e. infantile dependence) toward a dominant animal, who responds by nuzzling the subordinate and perhaps licking its head the way we might affectionately touse a boy's hair. It can also be seen in the impulse of an untrained domestic dog to lick the face (or failing that, the hands or feet) of his master or mistress. Domestic pups also paw at and lick their mother's muzzle (triggering her regurgitation); and they stimulate the flow of milk in her dugs by pawing at, licking and biting them. So it is quite natural for your pet dog to seek reassurance (in this case, petting) by pawing at you, nudging you with its head or licking your hand. Like all of us social animals, he is a big baby, a paedomorph. We use the smile in precisely the same way, and the social kiss too in certain cultures. I remember how, while in the East, I resented the calculated use of the smile by people who wished to elicit favors from me, but this is a time-honored practice!

A baby's first smile may simply be the muscular expansion of the anterior end of a healthy digestive tract, instinctively opening its gummy mouth for its mother's breast. We are all familiar with the effects of good and poor digestion on our social behavior—in fact the two are so intimately connected that it is difficult often to know if unsociable thoughts and a sour puss cause dyspepsia or vice versa. If the smile is an expression of receptivity, then the frown is an equally ancient expression of disgust, or rejection. And the connection with food is always there. Much of our language of like and dislike is associated with food—taste, savor, relish, “can't swallow that,” “can't stomach that,” unpalatable, disgusting, revolting, etc.—and the most violent expressions of dislike are

connected with vomiting or its slightly more refined equivalent, spitting, not to speak of the various forms of excretory waste (breaking wind, etc.) that serve among uneducated people as invectives of tremendous emotional power.

A baby, moreover, uses its tongue to push out food it doesn't want. Could the childish practice of sticking the tongue out or spitting at someone, derive from this refusal of food, the very opposite of begging? In adults the expression is more refined and takes various forms in people with different temperaments—the mouth is invariably closed, sometimes with the lips pursed, but more often pushed out in a pout or turned down. The head too is turned away like a petulant infant who is refusing food....

So the smile is a signal of receptivity, the basis for the exchange of food, and later the exchange of goods, ideas or the time of day. Indeed, even after millennia of social evolution in *Homo sapiens*, all our social exchanges begin with a smile. (Try having even business dealings with an unsmiling stranger!) We may no longer be exchanging food—although food and drink still, out of habit and unconscious association, play a large role in sexual courtship, business and friendship—but these ancient signals of receptivity, invented by babies, are always the starting-point.

DAVID HOPKINS

NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

Up from Eden—Ken Wilber on Sri Aurobindo

KEN Wilber is one of the best known and most prominent American New Age writers. By education, he is a scientist who has graduated in biology and biochemistry, by choice he has become an author in the field of spiritual and esoteric literature. A look at the Bibliography of his main work *Up from Eden—A Transpersonal View of Human Evolution** shows the enormous scope of his readings: it lists 444 titles, many of which he refers to in his book, among them texts by Sri Aurobindo, Teilhard de Chardin, H. Bergson, A. Coomaraswamy, Freud, Jung, Ramana Maharshi and D. T. Suzuki, to name just a few of the well-known authors. The book has six references to Sri Aurobindo, and it would be interesting to see what he has to say on the Indian yogi-philosopher. I have selected three of the more important references for discussion. Here are the excerpts:

(1) “Mankind,” said Plotinus, “is poised midway between the gods and the beasts.” (...) The distance between man and the gods is not all that much greater than the distance between beasts and man. We have already closed the latter gap, and there is no reason to suppose that we shall not eventually close the former. As Aurobindo and Teilhard de Chardin knew, the future of humankind is God-consciousness, and we will want to examine this future in the entire context of human history. (p. IX)

(2) Finally, the “force” of evolution that has so insistently produced *higher-level wholes*—a force which cannot be explained by natural selection—is simply Atman telos itself, as everybody from Aristotle to Hegel to Aurobindo has carefully pointed out. Evolution is not a statistical accident—it is a laboring toward Spirit, driven, not by happy-go-lucky chance, however comforting that motion is to those who deny reality to any level higher than insentient matter, but by Spirit itself. *That* is why evolution is a progressive advancement, and why it proceeds in leaps and bounds that far outdistance statistical probabilities. This perennial view of evolution, in short, does that which Darwinianism cannot: account not only for the what of evolution but the why. (p. 305)

(3) I am not alone in this overall view. Sri Aurobindo, India’s great modern sage, has written extensively on just this viewpoint—Brahman getting lost in involution and then evolving back—from matter to prana to mind to over-mind to super-mind and Atman, and he sees it occurring cosmologically as well

* Shambala, Boston 1986 Pp 372, \$ 14 95

psychologically. Aurobindo, of course, is one of the few geniuses and full mystics (East or West) who also had the opportunity and willingness to study the anthropological and paleontological records compiled so carefully by modern science, and he found those records to be not only compatible with his view but supportive of it. Aurobindo is joined in his view by many other modern Indian giants, Radhakrishnan, Chaudury, Gopi Krishna, etc. (p 313)

Commentary

(1) The quotation from Plotinus as well as the reference to the Indian and the French thinker right in the first paragraph of the Preface indicate that Wilber envisages a kind of evolution which does not stop with mental man, but heads for higher stages of development. Mentioning Teilhard de Chardin along with Sri Aurobindo in this context is quite appropriate. K. D. Sethna especially has explored the subject in extensive comparative studies, which were published in *Mother India* in a series long ago. Many of these studies were put together in book-form: *The Spirituality of the Future* (Associated Presses of America, 1980). The opening remark in Wilber's book deserves full appreciation.

(2) Wilber is quite in line with Sri Aurobindo in his basic description of Evolution in this passage. As a comparative text I may offer an excerpt taken from *On Himself* (p 105, Cent Ed.).

“But here in the material world or at its basis he [the Divine] has hidden himself in what seem to be his opposites, Non-Being, Inconscience and Insentience. This is what we nowadays call the Inconscient which seems to have created the material universe by its inconscient Energy, but this is only an appearance, for we find in the end that all the dispositions of the world can only have been arranged by the working of a supreme secret Intelligence. The Being which is hidden in what seems to be an inconscient void emerges in the world first in Matter, then in Life, then in Mind and finally, as the Spirit.”

(3) Wilber is not alone, indeed, in many of his views; in this case, his concept of involution and evolution. Otherwise his admirers would be right in calling him “the Einstein of consciousness research”, a claim which appears vastly exaggerated to those who have a good knowledge of Vedanta, Sri Aurobindo and other writers of earlier generations. Wilber is very good in restating and connecting, in actualizing old truths, but they are not his own discoveries. Nor does he make that claim, although he sometimes creates the impression of having developed his own vision which is so to say confirmed by other writers (from whom actually he may have taken his clues). At the same time we have to see his sincerity in naming sources which other New Age writers secretly study without ever bothering to refer to them, presenting everything as their personal luminous creation.

Quite apart from that, Wilber's view on involution and evolution is not

exactly the same as Sri Aurobindo's, although it would require a complete thesis to show the differences in detail. As an example of very fine passages I may present the following quotation:

“Each level is an illusory separation from Spirit because each level is really a separation of Spirit by Spirit through Spirit. (...) Spirit is not *lost* at each level, just *forgotten*; obscured, not destroyed; hidden, not abandoned. This is a great game of hide-and-peek; with Spirit being I.” (p. 301)

Wilber is quite wrong in stating that Sri Aurobindo “is joined in his view” by Radhakrishnan and Gopi Krishna. Radhakrishnan definitely had a different philosophy, basing himself on Shankara's Mayavada, though giving it a changed interpretation and thus also arriving at a somewhat world-positive view. I may add that he has never been considered a yogi. As for Gopi Krishna, he followed a line of Kundalini-yoga not affiliated to integral yoga and is not known as a great philosopher in any way.

In concluding, I may mention that Wilber himself is a practising Buddhist and feels more attracted to the spiritual status of a Ramana Maharshi. In fact, “the return to the Atman” means to him just that, the stable traditional realization of the eternal Self, as embodied in the sage of Tiruvannamalai. As a Buddhist, he discovers the same “peak” of realization in Hui-neng or Padma-sambhava and speaks in this context of “the first true and complete understanding of the Svabhavikakaya” (p. 320). Nevertheless, Wilber's positive remarks on Sri Aurobindo also deserve full recognition. Among those who are not followers of the Indian yogi, I don't know many other Western authors who have so openly expressed their appreciation of his spiritual philosophy.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

1. How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother: Vol. I. 29 True Stories of Sadhaks and Devotees (22 appearing in print for the first time). Author and Publisher: *Shyam Kumari*, pages - x + 256. Price Rs. 48/- (postage extra)

2. How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother: Vol. II. 36 More True Stories of Sadhaks and Devotees (27 appearing in print for the first time). Author and Publisher: *Shyam Kumari*, Price: Rs. 48/- (postage extra)

Available from the author: Shyam Kumari, c/o Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 605 002.

To the Pilgrim of Eternity there cannot be greater “Helpers on the Way” than Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. When we think of it, they are more than mere “Helpers”; they are themselves “the Gate and the Way”, indeed, they are the Goal.

In the two volumes under review Shyam Kumari tells us sixty-five “true stories” of Pilgrims who came to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. She could have as well spoken of how Sri Aurobindo and the Mother came to the Pilgrims. She is not unaware of the fact that Aspiration and Grace are a double movement in which each answers to the other and one can never say which precedes which. It is well known how those who choose the Infinite are already chosen by the Infinite.

Among the Pilgrims some are master-seekers of the Master and the Mother, men of large souls and long strides like Dyuman, the “Luminous One”, Pavitra, “the Pure”, Pranab, “the Mother’s Shadow.” There are humbler souls who exalt themselves by arriving at the sacred Feet they seek in different ways. The stories are best read in the charming style of Shyam Kumari herself. In her beautiful narrations she reveals herself to be as ardent a Pilgrim as any other she describes with a love and zest only one who has sought and got the experience is capable of.

Often she has met the different seekers and got the facts from them. She has sometimes used ready-made material from other sources.

The stories are valuable not only for the details of the Pilgrims’ Progress, the crucial moments of their lives when they “cross the Rubicon” and the struggles, the agonies and ecstasies that follow thereafter, but for the picture of the Divine Love that is ever ready to succour and solace, lead and guide the human soul. Sri Aurobindo, no less than the Mother, is mindful of every Sadhak, his needs and problems, his state of progress and the help he requires. One is surprised—rather not surprised if one knows the nature of the Divine—to see the Mother attend to the minute details of the Sadhak’s life. To one she orders that oranges be sent, for another she cooks with her own hands, for yet another she does

something equally personal. She admires physical strength—she draws the figure of fists of a Sadhak to show Sri Aurobindo—as much as intellectual calibre or spiritual quality. The reader of Shyam Kumari's loving portrayals learns that the Gurus that the Sadhaks seek are no grim awe-inspiring figures but the very embodiments of the Supreme Love.

One cannot help feeling that in the excellent volumes of Shyam Kumari's there are some omissions. But there must be circumstances that excuse them. What one cannot help wondering at is one inclusion.

Could Jawaharlal Nehru, great as he is, be called a Pilgrim by any stretch of imagination and could his "coming" to the Mother be compared to the arrival of other seekers? One would feel that Jawaharlal was indeed a Pilgrim who missed his way. But one cannot dogmatize. Gandhi said once that Jawaharlal was nearer God than most religious men. But the Mother's own words on the occasion of his passing bring out the sense in which he was a Pilgrim and the destination at which he arrived:

...his soul is one with the Soul of India that lives for Eternity.

The volumes are sure to inspire more pilgrims to dare tread the long and arduous but "rose-strewn" (not Primrose!) path to the *Civitas Dei*.

K. B. SITARAMAYYA

Psychology, Mental Health and Yoga, by A. S. Dalal, published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, pp. 161, price Rs. 50/-

This book is a collection of essays earlier published in the annual numbers of Sri Aurobindo Circle. Its purpose, and the readers it is addressed to, are specifically mentioned in the excellent preface.

The purpose is, in the author's words, "to present some salient features of Sri Aurobindo's psychological thought and its implications for mental health in order to bring out some points of convergence, as also of divergence, between psychology and mental health on one hand and yoga on the other." This purpose is admirably served.

The categories of readers addressed are three, namely, students of yoga interested in psychology, students and teachers of psychology who wish to have an introduction to the Aurobindonian system of psychology, and persons interested in the interface between the two disciplines.

The author stresses the value of reading with a quiet concentration the copious quotations from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Such a quiet concentration would induce "a certain receptive state which is conducive to a deeper understanding of what the words express". Very true indeed. A judgmental

approach hence is to be scrupulously avoided.

The book is indeed a good introduction of modern psychology to students of Sri Aurobindo's yoga and of yoga to students of psychology. Modern psychology is gradually becoming multi-dimensional and slowly approaching the concepts in Sri Aurobindo's thought. This points towards a future trend of bringing the two disciplines nearer. Both need to understand each other's views in order to more successfully relate to each other.

The exhaustive references at the end of each chapter should encourage the reader to go to the originals since many topics in this book have, because of restriction of space, necessarily been dealt with briefly.

The closing chapter introduces peace as a positive healing force. The normal connotation of peace is negative, an absence of restlessness, while, as an apt quotation of the Mother on page 146 points out, peace is a very positive state and not the opposite of conflict. Peace is a great force and a great strength. The author expounds well what peace is, how to attain it, and how to utilise it as a healing power.

All in all, a definitely worthwhile buy. I hope that the next book by the author would deal with the treatment of mental illnesses and disorders in the light of Sri Aurobindo's system of yoga.

DINKAR PALANDE

In Harmony with Nature—by *Clementeswar*. Published by Lily Publications, 31, Nehru Nagar, Kamaraj Road, Pondicherry 605 011. Pages: viii + 108. Price: Rs. 30 (P.B.), Rs. 60 (H.B.)

In his 'Preface' the author confesses that this book is "a layman's attempt to incite an awareness among the younger generation in order to understand and lead a meaningful life without detriment to the beauty and tranquillity of nature".

Divided into three major sections, the first two unravel to us what God has done with all magnanimity for mankind, while the last one pin-points how man with all selfishness has spoilt it.

The book begins with a conflict between Religion and Science. The secret of creation, the formation and the mystery of life, the creation of Man considered to be "the paragon of animals" (to put it in the words of Shakespeare), the development of Science are the topics taken for discussion in the first part of this highly informative book written with verve. In the eyes of Mr. Clementeswar, scientists in spite of all their powers even to destroy the earth are merely puppets in the hands of Nature. The Tamil Poet Paambaatti Siddhar sang of the helplessness of man before death: "Will all your powerful military force put

together be able to shield you from the inescapable noose of the Lord of Death? Dance, O Snake, and teach the ignorant curs the essence of Divine Truth." The author of this book too says: "A science based upon a mechanistic concept of the universe cannot understand the secret of creation." Discussing in detail the eleven tonne Hubble Space Telescope placed in orbit above the earth by the US Space Shuttle Discovery with the task of solving many of the mysteries about the birth of galaxies and the universe, the author sarcastically concludes: "It is heralded as a 'new eye in the sky', yet it is not going to peep into heaven."

Perhaps with the intention of pleading for global peace, Mr. Clementeswar finds little difference between Hinduism and Christianity. He furnishes quite a good number of points to substantiate his view. What a magnificent role Vibhuti, otherwise known as Ash, plays in the lives of the two religious sects!

The first part of this book is akin to that of the unfading garland that enhances the glory of Mother India. The author's words take the shape of a sturdy hand to give a death-blow to all those nincompoops and ignoramuses who speak and think of Western culture and civilization, while they don't even bother to know what India is. Don't we, the Indians, need a foreigner like Dr. Roberto Pinoti, the Italian Scientist, to tell us: "India may have had a superior civilization with possible contacts with extra-terrestrial visitors!"?

Indian Yoga therapy, Alchemy in India, the preparation of the 'elixir of life' to attain immortality, the ancient flying devices with the help of special heat-absorbing metals, the 32 secrets relating to the operation of Vimanas as explicated in *Vymanika Shastra*, an ancient Hindu text, the longevity of human life as defined by the scriptures are given special attention in this section of the book.

The second section vies with the first in giving information. Traditionally, we Indians are forest-loving people and even today if we can boast of a few forests left it is all due to the basic approach of our ancestors to the vegetation which is one of conservation rather than destruction.

The various kinds of trees, plants and flowers found in India are listed. Their botanical names, their characteristics and their uses are also provided. The author gives the same treatment to the fauna of India. Here is an example of what Mr. Clementeswar has stored for us in his book. This is about a civet cat:

"Western Ghats have different species of civets out of which the "small Indian Civet" (*Viverricula Indica*) is a greyish brown with black spotted and streaked animal. It is omnivorous. The secretion of its perineal gland helps the civet for sex-related functions. The secreted paste of civet is cherished in the perfume industry for its fragrance and used with other aromatic compounds. It is used as ointment for boils in Siddha system of medicine. Civet's aromatic paste is called 'punugu' in Tamil and the main deity of Siva temple—Sattainathar of Seerkazhi—is smeared with this paste even today."

Separate chapters are devoted to domestic animals, colourful insects, and birds. Necessary particulars are stuffed into palatable capsules, and the gathered

information continues to linger in the mind of the readers long after the book is closed.

In his *Dictionary*, Dr. Johnson, the Great Cham of Literature, has given us a sufficient number of unforgettable definitions of words. And the most unforgettable among them is the one given to 'smoking Pipe'. He defines: "Fire at one end and a fool at the other." In this book too, we have quite a good number of short write-ups on all things that fall under nature. Read below what Mr. Clementeswar has written about 'Donkey': "...Donkey is considered to be the simplest and most unselfish animal which can work incessantly and on poor forage. It is well known for its stupidity and obstinacy. The ill-treatment meted out to this beast of burden by man is inexorable. Anyone whose eyes happen to meet a young calf of a donkey could not but admire the bushy little creature. Its milk, which is easily digestible, is highly valued in India and in many other countries like Italy, Spain and France as a most suitable substitute for human milk. Giving donkey's milk in doses to new born babies, considering its medicinal properties, is still in practice in rural India. The legendary beauty queen Cleopatra was said to have been bathing in donkey's milk!"

The answer to the question, "What has ungrateful man done to Nature?" forms the essence of the third section. But the author does not stop with accusing mankind of polluting the earth and wasting its resources. He has a lot of suggestions to offer to the needy. "Keep the city clean. Let us make the city beautiful." These are slogans shouted into megaphones to jar on our ears. But not even one in a thousand ever bothers to keep his house clean. Nek Chands of Chandigarh are rare to find. And how well the author drives home the truth in these following words: "Without cleanliness, beautification means dressing the dirty."

What is all the reason for this attitude of man? Why has he degraded himself to the level of the quadruped? Mr. Clementeswar points his accusing finger at us and yells: "Over-Population." Even today we come across male parents who plead: "God gives. And how can we refuse? We are helpless." But Mr. Clementeswar recommends family planning methods. Discussing the Rhythm Method or Safe Period Method, he teaches us how to count the days in order to avoid the risk of pregnancy. He makes it easy with the help of a chart. He emphasises breast-feeding which is also a family planning method devised by nature.

Mr. Clementeswar's book *In Harmony With Nature* is a mine of information. It is a handy Encyclopaedia. It is everyman's guide for it teaches us the "do-s" and "do not-s" of our life. It is a book of facts useful to students getting ready for competitive examinations.

The only criticism possible to make is that its English might have been at some places less Indian.

P. RAJA

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Seventieth Seminar

21 April 1991

“WHAT ARE THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SRI AUROBINDO’S YOGA AND OTHER SPIRITUAL PATHS?”

Speech Read by Rajeev Bhatt

In India, since time immemorial, there have existed many systems of yoga, each with its distinct aim and method of practice. Sri Aurobindo has enunciated his own system which he has named “Integral Yoga”, and laid down a unique synthetic method for its practice. The question is therefore often raised: In what way does it differ in its aim and method from the traditional systems of yoga? What is really “new” in his system? He has also called his Integral Yoga “the Yoga of supramental transformation”. So it is asked: What is the difference between this supramental transformation and spiritual liberation which is the aim of most of the other traditional systems?

The question is very important because if Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga is the same in its principle and process as the other yogas, then it cannot claim to be “new” in any real sense of the word. But Sri Aurobindo clearly says that his yoga “is not a retreading of old walks, but a spiritual adventure.”¹ Being a “spiritual adventure” it certainly seeks for something “new” that is not yet known in the spiritual history of the past in India or elsewhere.

An adequate answer to this important question is very necessary but instead of providing it in my own words, I prefer to read a long letter which Sri Aurobindo wrote to a disciple in 1935, in which he himself has given a precise and comprehensive answer to this very question which was put to him.

Here is his letter:

New Elements in Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga

“By transformation I do not mean some change of the nature—I do not mean, for instance, sainthood or ethical perfection or Yogic Siddhis (like the Tantrik’s) or a transcendental (*cinmaya*) body. I use transformation in a special sense, a change of consciousness radical and complete and of a certain specific

¹ *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed Vol 22), p 101

kind which is so conceived as to bring about a strong and assured step forward in the spiritual evolution of the being of a greater and higher kind and of a larger sweep and completeness than what took place when a mentalised being first appeared in a vital and material animal world. If anything short of that takes place or at least if a real beginning is not made on that basis, a fundamental progress towards this fulfilment, then my object is not accomplished. A partial realisation, something mixed and inconclusive, does not meet the demand I make on life and Yoga.

“Light of realisation is not the same thing as Descent. Realisation by itself does not necessarily transform the being as a whole; it may bring only an opening or heightening or widening of the consciousness at the top so as to realise something in the Purusha part without any radical change in the parts of Prakriti. One may have some light of realisation at the spiritual summit of the consciousness but the parts below remain what they were. I have seen any number of instances of that. There must be a descent of the light not merely into the mind or part of it but into all the being down to the physical and below before a real transformation can take place. A light in the mind may spiritualise or otherwise change the mind or part of it in one way or another, but it need not change the vital nature; a light in the vital may purify and enlarge the vital movements or else silence and immobilise the vital being, but leave the body and the physical consciousness as it was, or even leave it inert or shake its balance. And the descent of Light is not enough, it must be the descent of the whole higher consciousness, its Peace, Power, Knowledge, Love, Ananda. Moreover, the descent may be enough to liberate, but not to perfect, or it may be enough to make a great change in the inner being, while the outer remains an imperfect instrument, clumsy, sick or unexpressive. Finally, transformation effected by the Sadhana cannot be complete unless it is a supramentalisation of the being. Psychicisation is not enough, it is only a beginning; spiritualisation and the descent of the higher consciousness is not enough, it is only a middle term; the ultimate achievement needs the action of the supramental Consciousness and Force. Something less than that may very well be considered enough by the individual, but it is not enough for the earth-consciousness to take the definitive stride forward it must take at one time or another.

“I have never said that my Yoga was something brand new in all its elements. I have called it the integral Yoga and that means that it takes up the essence and many processes of the old Yogas—its newness is in its aim, standpoint and the totality of its method. In the earlier stages which is all I deal with in books like the “Riddle”¹ or the “Lights”² or in the new book to be published³ there is nothing in it that distinguishes it from the old Yogas except

¹ *The Riddle of this World*

² *Lights on Yoga*

³ *The Bases of Yoga*

the aim underlying its comprehensiveness, the spirit in its movements and the ultimate significance it keeps before it—also the scheme of its psychology and its working: but as that was not and could not be developed systematically or schematically in these letters, it has not been grasped by those who are not already acquainted with it by mental familiarity or some amount of practice. The detail or method of the later stages of the Yoga which go into little known or untrodden regions, I have not made public and I do not at present intend to do so.

“I know very well also that there have been seemingly allied ideals and anticipations—the perfectibility of the race, certain Tantric Sadhanas, the effort after a complete physical Siddhi by certain schools of Yoga, etc., etc. I have alluded to these things myself and have put forth the view that the spiritual past of the race has been a preparation of Nature not merely for attaining the Divine beyond the world, but also for this very step forward which the evolution of the earth-consciousness has still to make. I do not therefore care in the least,—even though these ideals were, up to some extent parallel, yet not identical with mine,—whether this Yoga and its aim and method are accepted as new or not; that is in itself a trifling matter. That it should be recognised as true in itself by those who can accept or practise it and should make itself true by achievement is the one thing important; it does not matter if it is called new or a repetition or revival of the old which was forgotten. I laid emphasis on it as new in a letter to certain Sadhaks so as to explain to them that a repetition of the aim and idea of the old Yogas was not enough in my eyes, that I was putting forward a thing to be achieved that has not yet been achieved, not yet clearly visualised, even though it is the natural but still secret outcome of all the past spiritual endeavour.

“It is new as compared with the old Yogas:

“1. Because it aims not at a departure out of world and life into Heaven or Nirvana, but at a change of life and existence, not as something subordinate or incidental, but as a distinct and central object. If there is a descent in other Yogas, yet it is only an incident on the way or resulting from the ascent—the ascent is the real thing. Here the ascent is the first step, but it is a means for the descent. It is the descent of the new consciousness attained by the ascent that is the stamp and seal of the Sadhana. Even the Tantra and Vaishnavism end in the release from life; here the object is the divine fulfilment of life.

“2. Because the object sought after is not an individual achievement of divine realisation for the sake of the individual, but something to be gained for the earth-consciousness here, a cosmic, not solely a supra-cosmic achievement. The thing to be gained also is the bringing in of a Power of Consciousness (the Supramental) not yet organised or active directly in earth-nature, even in the spiritual life, but yet to be organised and made directly active.

“3. Because a method has been preconized for achieving this purpose which is as total and integral as the aim set before it, viz., the total and integral change

of the consciousness and nature, taking up old methods but only as a part action and present aid to others that are distinctive. I have not found this method (as a whole) or anything like it professed or realised in the old Yogas. If I had, I should not have wasted my time in hewing out a road and in thirty years of search and inner creation when I could have hastened home safely to my goal in an easy canter over paths already blazed out, laid down, perfectly mapped, macadamised, made secure and public. Our Yoga is not a retreading of old walks, but a spiritual adventure.¹

5.10.1935

SRI AUROBINDO

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *On Himself* (Cent Ed Vol 26), pp 108-109