

# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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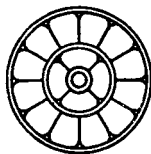
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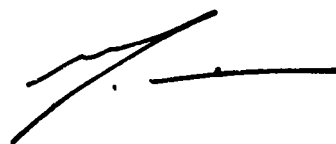
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLV

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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## THE MOTHER ON THE COMPLEXITY OF OUR NATURE

*Sweet Mother, here it is written "It is part of the foundation of Yoga to become conscious of the great complexity of our nature, see the different forces that move it and get over it a control of directing knowledge." Are these forces different for each person?*

YES. The composition is completely different, otherwise everybody would be the same. There are not two beings with an identical combination; between the different parts of the being and the composition of these parts the proportion is different in each individual. There are people, primitive men, people like the yet undeveloped races or the degenerated ones whose combinations are fairly simple; they are still complicated, but comparatively simple. And there are people absolutely at the top of the human ladder, the élite of humanity; their combinations become so complicated that a very special discernment is needed to find the relations between all these things.

There are beings who carry in themselves thousands of different personalities, and then each one has its own rhythm and alternations, and there is a kind of combination, sometimes there are inner conflicts, and there is a play of activities which are rhythmic and with alternations of certain parts which come to the front and then go back and again come to the front. But when one takes all that, it makes such complicated combinations that some people truly find it difficult to understand what is going on in themselves, and yet these are the ones most capable of a complete, co-ordinated, conscious, organised action; but their organisation is infinitely more complicated than that of primitive or undeveloped men who have two or three impulses and four or five ideas, and who can arrange all this very easily in themselves and seem to be very co-ordinated and logical because there is not very much to organise. But there are people truly like a multitude, and so that gives them a plasticity, a fluidity of action and an extraordinary complexity of perception, and these people are capable of understanding a considerable number of things, as though they had at their disposal a veritable army which they move according to circumstance and need; and all this is inside them. So when these people, with the help of yoga, the discipline of yoga, succeed in centralising all these beings around the central light of the divine Presence, they become powerful entities, precisely because of their complexity. So long as this is not organised they often give the impression of an incoherence, they are almost incomprehensible, one can't manage to understand why they are like that, they are so complex. But when they have organised all these beings, that is, put each one in its place around the divine centre, then truly they are terrific for they have the capacity of understanding almost everything and doing almost everything because of the multitude of entities they contain, of which they are constituted. And the nearer one is to the summit of the ladder,

the more is it like that, and consequently the more difficult is it to organise one's being; because when you have about a dozen elements, you can quickly compass and organise them, but when you have thousands of them, it is difficult.

*(Collected Works of the Mother, Centenary Ed., Vol. 7, pp. 215-16.)*

## THE MOTHER ON FEAR

WHY fear? Fear is a useless and cumbersome thing. If you are reasonable, you understand that fear cannot prevent anything. If something unpleasant is tending to happen, you cannot stop it by your fear. But if it is not tending to happen, your fear attracts it and then it is likely to happen. If you replace fear by confidence, you can prevent unpleasant happenings. People who have confidence go through life safely, without accidents—nothing goes wrong with them.

10 5 1958

*(Noted by Amal Kiran)*

## THE MOTHER'S ANSWER TO A MONITRESS

*Sweet Mother,*

*The students, especially the adolescents, often complain that they have to do even the physical exercises that they do not like and do not find interesting. Would you reply to this, Mother?*

WE are not on earth to follow our own sweet will but to progress.

Physical exercises are not done for fun or to satisfy one's whims, but as a methodical discipline to develop and strengthen the body.

True wisdom is to take pleasure in everything one does and that is possible if one takes everything one does as a way to progress. Perfection is difficult to attain and there is always a great deal of progress to be made in order to achieve it.

TO SEEK PLEASURE IS CERTAINLY THE BEST WAY TO MAKE YOURSELF MISERABLE:

If you truly want peace and happiness, your constant preoccupation should be:

“What progress must I make to be able to know and serve the Divine?!”\*

Show this to C. She ought not to have listened to what the children say. She has been here a long time. She ought to know that.

That [“To seek pleasure is certainly the best way to make yourself miserable”] is an absolute truth. It affirms that if you want to satisfy your little ego, you are sure to be unhappy. For sure! It is the best way to make yourself miserable. To say: “Oh, it is boring; oh, I must do what I like; oh, that person is unkind to me; oh, life does not bring me what I want.” Ouah!!!

“Am I what I ought to be?”

“Am I doing what I ought to be doing?”

“Am I progressing as much as I should?”

Then it becomes interesting.

“What should I learn in order to make my next progress? What infirmity must I cure? What shortcomings must I overcome? What weakness must I get rid of?”

And, then naturally, the next moment: “How can I become capable of understanding and serving the Divine?”

I have written it down specially so that you can show it to C.

*(Collected Works of the Mother, Centenary Ed., Vol 12, pp. 383-385.)*

\* Written question and reply The comment following is oral

## SRI AUROBINDO ON THE REAL DIFFICULTY

THE real difficulty is always in ourselves, not in our surroundings. There are three things necessary in order to make men invincible, Will, Disinterestedness and Faith. We may have a will to emancipate ourselves, but sufficient faith may be lacking. We may have a faith in our ultimate emancipation, but the will to use the necessary means may be wanting. And even if there are will and faith, we may use them with a violent attachment to the fruit of our work or with passions of hatred, blind excitement or hasty forcefulness which may produce evil reactions. For this reason it is necessary, in a work of such magnitude, to have resort to a higher Power than that of mind and body in order to overcome unprecedented obstacles. This is the need of *sādhanā*.

God is within us, an Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient Power; we and He are of one nature and, if we get into touch with Him and put ourselves in His hands, He will pour into us His own force and we shall realise that we too have our share of godhead, our portion of omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience. The path is long, but self-surrender makes it short; the way is difficult, but perfect trust makes it easy.

Will is omnipotent, but it must be divine will, selfless, tranquil, at ease about results. "If you had faith even as a grain of mustard-seed," said Jesus, "you would say to this mountain, Come, and it would come to you." What was meant by the word Faith, was really Will accompanied with perfect *śraddhā*. *Śraddhā* does not reason, it knows for it commands sight and sees what God wills, and it knows that what is God's will, must happen, *Śraddhā*, not blind but using sight spiritual, can become omniscient.

Will is also omnipresent. It can throw itself into all with whom it comes into contact and give them temporarily or permanently a portion of its power, its thought, its enthusiasm. The thought of a solitary man can become, by exercise of selfless and undoubting will, the thought of a nation. The will of a single hero can breathe courage into the hearts of a million cowards.

This is the Sadhana that we have to accomplish. This is the condition of our emancipation. We have been using an imperfect will with imperfect faith and imperfect disinterestedness. Yet the task we have before us is not less difficult than to move a mountain.

The force that can do it, exists. But it is hidden in a secret chamber within us and of that chamber God holds the key. Let us find Him and claim it.

(*Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 17, pp 178-79 )



# LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

## SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

LET me hurry up to wish you a birthday which will be—in some words from *Savitri*—

A golden temple-door to things beyond.

The “things beyond” are the holy presences in the inmost sanctuary to which the temple-door leads and of which the goldenness of that entrance is the promise. A soul-state of intense yet steady luminosity revealing the Supreme Lord and the Divine Mother as the immortal In-dwellers of our being is the best birthday-realisation I can wish you.

I am sure that nothing less than this can meet the needs of your nature. You are a born devotee of the Eternal and the Infinite. I think you belong to that rare company to whom instinctive or intuitive movements deep within make, as Wordsworth puts it,

Our noisy years seem moments in the being  
Of the eternal Silence,

and for whom the long littleness of the ordinary life is never final, feeling as they do, with Wordsworth again, that

Whether we be young or old,  
Our destiny, our being's heart and home  
Is with infinitude, and only there.

Of course, the perception of a Splendour in our depths, which is beyond our small outer existence and is yet our own self's secret truth—such a perception does not necessarily mean a neglect by us of all passing and finite matters, for it is in them that the inmost verity's radiance has to be shed. So I should not sound unnatural if from the subject of Spirit and Soul connected with your birthday I make a transition to the theme of the history you have given me of your food-intake down the years. Each one has to adjust his food according to his body's reactions. What you have settled upon seems to me a good diet. I don't know why you object to eggs. One egg a day could be a substantial aid to strength, provided you with your slightly uncertain stomach can digest it. I can understand your objection to onions and garlic, but they are not, as you say, “tamasic” or inertia-causing food: they are rajasic or excitement-producing stuff. I personally don't fancy them in general because they affect one's breath and sometimes even

one's sweat. This applies to onions only when they are taken raw. My constitution accepts all kinds of food I don't particularly go after any kind, but welcome whatever is given—and everything is inwardly offered to the Divine Mother with the prayer: "May it all go to the growth of your divinity in me!" (20 2 1992)

\*

I arrived at my flat on March 17 after five months at the Ashram Nursing Home. Physiotherapy has started in right earnest to make me cope more efficiently with the problems left by the fracture of last October 15 I have renewed my old rhythm in general. The most important note recurring is my daily afternoon-visit to the Samadhi, albeit now in a wheelchair It's glorious to be there again. In the old days I felt I was inwardly embracing the Samadhi. Now it is as if the Samadhi were inwardly embracing me. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother seem overjoyed to find me back "home" and they press their light upon my head and their love upon my heart without ceasing.

The Divine appears to be more happy in gaining poor infinitesimal Me than I could be in plunging into the inexhaustible splendour of His beatific immensity. The Divine's Grace has always puzzled me at the same time that it has enraptured me. It is as though to get one little kiss from me God enfolds me with a whole cosmos of sunlike warmth and moonlike tenderness and innumerable star-touches of thrilling intimacy. I have always felt myself a most unlikely explorer of the mystic consciousness, ever a stranger to the art of detached God-dedicated action, a self-doubter even as a devotee at a Guru's feet and yet all my wandering world-tempted wats have somehow been drawn to Yoga. Turn as often as I may my ears to the song of the sirens, my face has been pulled away again and again in the opposite direction by the strains of a far flute throbbing in earth's air from Brindavan's woods thousands of years ago I am amazed at this phenomenon.

Not that I am materially minded in contrast to the spiritual temper. I am no worshipper of shekels but, as I have often declared, I am by nature a dweller on the left bank of the Seine, the Latin Quarter, the resort of beauty-drunk artists and endless chasers of ideas The world visible to the sharpened senses, the vast field of the mind's manifold review of things—these were the lures to me. Through curious circumstances I was thrown into a search for the invisible, a grope for the unthinkable. Luckily, they brought me before Sri Aurobindo and face to face with the Mother Here were beings of flesh and blood, concretely on earth, who yet stood for the Beyond and the Boundless Because of them I could turn to the spiritual life.

They also showed through their spirituality a firm clasp on the world of form and rhythm that is the delight of the born artist and an equal grip on the sphere of multitudinous interlinked ideas that is the passion of the insatiable thinker. If

the Mother had not been a painter and a musician, if Sri Aurobindo had not philosophised and written poetry of both vision and reflection, I would scarcely have made the Ashram my permanent home. And once I chose to live there, they with an incalculable love kept a hold on me. It was a hold I desired because it was so warm and rich—I asked for it to continue even if I were to feel like drifting away to the old non-Yogic life. And now at the Samadhi after five months of absence I experienced once more the sweet eagerness of the Divine to lock me up in His lavish affection as if I were a Koh-i-noor, “a mountain of light”, instead of being a mere pebble of a disciple whom strange forces had kicked into His courtyard.

Now enough about me. Your news is very cheering. To dip into *Savitri* anywhere as if it were a book of oracles and read two or three pages with intense pleasure at “the word-music and the tremendously beautiful English” is a great move forward in the re-creation of your inner being. And a step forward too is your trying to add to what you call your “repertoire of heart-sadhana” that dictum of Sri Aurobindo’s: “Love the Mother. Always behave as if the Mother was looking at you; because she is, indeed, always present.” Whatever renders the Mother an increasingly vivid reality to us is a step ahead on the Aurobindonian path. Your new moves make you a more congenial companion to me in the spiritual search. For, most of my Yoga boils down to conjuring up the Mother before my eyes and steeping myself in the keen memory of that atmosphere of warm wideness and holy soul-building silence which I always felt in her presence.

(26.3 1992)

\*

You say: “I am convinced that your prayers can reach the Mother more easily than mine. So always I have been asking you to give just two minutes for me.” I don’t understand why you should attach special merit to my prayers. Isn’t everybody capable of doing what I do? My method is very natural and simple. Whatever is to be put before the Mother I just carry as if in a void crystal to a great Void beyond my head and there I am lost with it in the Mother’s presence for a few minutes. I feel an intense reaching out to her benevolent hands and nothing exists for me then except those hands, all-receiving, all-granting. I do not imagine any answer but wait in a prolonged concentrated hush into which something takes shape at her touch. I don’t try to “read” what she has put there. The trying would break the spell. I wait for the end of the meeting between my void and her Void. When I am back to myself her reply casts a sort of image on my mind. Sometimes it is very clear and detailed—on other occasions it is rather general but some sort of drift is usually caught. The secret of the prayer is the utter absorption in the appeal, the utter lack of preconception as to the response, the utter undemanding joy in the communion with the supreme Beauty and Beatitude, the utter openness to whatever comes out of their incalculable Grace.

The prayer is no casual act. Something goes forth from deep down within, as if one's whole self were gathered into it for a while. What is done is a part of the sadhana and when it is over I am myself a little nearer the Divine at the same time that I have striven to take my friend a bit closer to that inexhaustible Sweetness.

The dream you have recounted is surely not just a throw-up of the subconscious. A few confused elements may be there but by and large it is an experience on an inner plane with a psychic light playing on it. If you found no trace at all of your physical disability, the plane could not be merely the subtle-physical. There, in the midst of a substantial change, some sign however faint of our physical condition is usually present. You were certainly meeting our Gurus and your soul was full of gratitude—that is why you wanted to offer to them the flower signifying Grace in recognition of the great benefit conferred on you, but it is rather a mystery why you could not directly make the offering and had to do it through somebody else. Perhaps a part of you was not wholly given to the opportunity you had been granted. Some hint of this part appears at the end of the dream when comes “the idea of returning home immediately as the train-time was so close”. However I feel that the somebody else was not really a non-you. You write that “he accepted” your “request” “with a smile”. It seems that he was your own soul which had been slightly separated from your inner state by the lurking anxiety about missing your train—the link with your outer being. The “smile” was a psychic signal, a reassurance that nothing was truly lost. Have I not spoken of your “smiling face” as something most characteristic of you the sadhak? Surely it can only be your soul that wears so natural a smile in spite of your terrible handicaps? (15.4.1992)

\*

Your letter asks me. “What has changed during all these eight years since we last met. You can say ‘Well, I have grown older and more experienced.’ Yes, but what does your experience say about supramentalisation and divinisation of the body? How far have we gone in the direction calculated to make us achieve those things—for the rest is all unimportant?”

You seem to be getting most things wrong. About my age you say “You were 29 in 1927 when you met Sri Aurobindo for the first time. So now you must be 94.” I was just 21 days past my 23rd year when I reached the Ashram. I met Sri Aurobindo for the first time on February 21, 1928. Since my arrival here I have kept my eyes strained towards the great goal Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have set up as the culmination of their Integral Yoga: the supramentalisation and divinisation of the body. But I have never forgotten that this goal has been put by them in a far-away future and that the central object has always been the realisation of the Divine—and now that our Gurus have left their bodies it is idle

to think that any of us is going to do in a lifetime what they themselves didn't. This does not mean we cannot move towards it with whatever speed an illumined snail can command. Don't be shocked at my irreverence. Indeed it is vain to imagine we can move fast in that direction. But the best means towards it is the deepening and widening and heightening of the realisation of the Divine, especially with the psychic being as the ever-smiling centre of our manifold mystic movement. Adopting your language I would say that all else is unimportant, and I would add: "In spite of physical supramentalisation having been postponed, things are going fairly well here."

In this connection the topic you have raised of X is pertinent. He is claiming to be supramentalising his body. Both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have clearly said that the supramentalisation of the mind, the vital being and the physical consciousness have to precede the body's supramentalisation—and that there would be a failure in the Integral Yoga if the true soul has not emerged and taken charge of the sadhana with its constant spontaneous surrender to the Divine, its instinctive wide-spreading sweetness, its unfailing light of guiding truth, its poised intensity of tranquil strength. We have to look for signs of these spiritual states before we accept anybody's—yes, any *body's*—claim towards the ultimate supramentalisation.

Here is Sri Aurobindo writing to Sahana on 14.11.1933. "It is quite impossible for the Supramental to take up the body before there has been the full supramental change in the mind and the vital." And what has the Mother to say? "Before you take up the work of physical transformation, which is of all things the most difficult, you must have your consciousness firmly, solidly established in the Truth." (*Bulletin*, Vol. XV, No. 4, p. 52)

Besides, we have to remember what Sri Aurobindo has said from the beginning about the role of the Guru. I'll quote a few items.

"In this discipline the inspiration of the Master and, in the difficult stages, his control and his presence are indispensable—for it would be impossible otherwise to go through it without much stumbling and error which would prevent all chances of success. The Master is one who has risen to a higher consciousness and being and he is often regarded as its manifestation or representative. He not only helps by his Yogic teaching and still more by his influence and example but by a power to communicate his own experience to others." (*Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram*)

"Each man who enters the realms of yogic experience is free to follow his own way; but this yoga is not a path for anyone to follow, but only for those who accept and seek the aim, pursue the way pointed out upon which a sure guidance is indispensable. It is idle for anyone to expect that he can follow this road far—much less go to the end by his own inner strength and knowledge without the true aid or influence. Even the ordinary long-practised yogas are hard to follow without the aid of the guru; in this which as it advances goes through

untrodden countries and unknown entangled regions, it is quite impossible.” (Birth Centenary Edition, *Letters on Yoga*, p. 1045)

“As for the letter, I suppose you will have to tell the writer that his father committed a mistake when he took up Yoga without a guru—for the mental idea of a Guru cannot take the place of the actual living influence. This Yoga especially, as I have written in my books, needs the help of the Guru and cannot be done without it.” (*Ibid.*, p. 1051)

Finally, there is Nirodbaran’s *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* (Vol. 2, p. 900), which I have already quoted in *Mother India* some time ago:

“Is it only for physical transformation that staying here is necessary?

Otherwise sincere sadhana can be done elsewhere as well as here ”

“I don’t suppose the later stages of the transformation including the physical would be possible elsewhere. In fact in those outside none of the three transformations [psychicisation, spiritualisation, supramentalisation] seems to have begun. They are all preparing. Here there are at least a few who have started one or two of them. Only that does not show outside. The physical or external alone shows outside ” (April 11, 1937)

Sri Aurobindo is talking of the Ashram. But surely no mere locality in Pondicherry is meant? What is meant is the place that has the physical presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. This presence is the *sine qua non* for the divinisation or supramentalisation of the body. Without it the last stage of the Aurobindonian Yoga can be reached not by what I have termed in my letters to friends a concentrated and accelerated process—a spiritual revolution, as it were in the present lifetime—but only by a process of spiritual evolution through life after life. It is postponed and not cancelled, because the Supramental Light, Consciousness and Force manifested in the subtle-physical layer of the earth on February 29, 1956 and became secretly an active evolutionary factor in earth’s history. With their manifestation the Mother has assured humanity’s future supramentalisation beginning, of course, with a nucleus of “supermen”. She was attempting also the spiritually revolutionary process—the supramental transformation of her own body, to be followed by the same change in her disciples provided they were thoroughgoing and psychically wide-open. This, for some reason of her own, did not work out. So we are left with the slow march of evolution. Even the pace of the spiritual revolution was never considered to be a super-swift one. The Mother has declared on Sri Aurobindo’s authority that, after all the inner Yogic realisations had been compassed, it would take three hundred years for the physical transformation to be accomplished. Of course, the accomplishment would be preceded by the power to prolong one’s life. And the accomplishment would be in the wake of the Gurus’ own bodily supramentalisation. Sri Aurobindo wrote to me long ago that he was not working for physical supramentalisation for his own self alone and added: “But if it is not done in myself, it cannot be done in others.” Of course he never put the Mother

on a par with “others”. When he left his body he told the Mother: “You have to fulfil our Yoga of Supramental Descent and Transformation.” If it was not fulfilled in the Mother, it cannot be fulfilled in any of us.

In Nirodbaran’s *Correspondence* (October 7, 1937, Vol 2, p 704), we also get a glimpse of two fundamental themes: (1) the central achievement in the supramental Yoga, (2) the ultimate result of it. Sri Aurobindo writes:

“What is vital is the supramental change of consciousness—conquest of death is something minor and, as I have always said, the last physical result of it, not the first result of all or the most important—a thing to be added to complete the whole, not the one thing needed and essential. To put it first is to reverse all spiritual values—it would mean that the seeker was actuated, not by any high spiritual aim but by a vital clinging to life or a selfish and timid seeking for the security of the body—such a spirit could not bring the supramental change.

“Certainly, everything depends on my success. The only thing that could prevent it, so far as I can see, would be my own death or the Mother’s ”

You have not faced—nor have many of us here faced—all these truths. Hence your questions and the eagerness to meet X. You tell me that you tried to “ferret” him out when you were in the USA but failed. Now you are appealing to my supposed “sixth sense” to give you his “exact address”. I am sorry I don’t have this sense on tap—and even if I had I would not waste it on what you desire

You have another question too: “Have you visited Auroville lately? Or are you still allergic to go to the wonder city of the future?” Well, in the early years after its foundation I went to Auroville a number of times. I gave a couple of talks to it and even spent a night there I have had no general allergy—only a few aversions to particular aspects of it in the past. (8.4 1992)

\*

I have not come across any specific and detailed pronouncement by Sri Aurobindo or the Mother about the Resurrection of Jesus which the new Testament speaks of. But I have gathered from their writings or talks two points that can bear upon it. The kind of risen body which Christians claim for Jesus is not what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother call the transformed supramentalised body which they have as the ultimate goal for humanity. Sri Aurobindo has clearly said that a body which by its alleged divinity does not remain on the earth as a tangible lasting presence cannot answer to his view of the supramental physical. Once when the Mother’s attention was drawn to the resurrected body attributed to Jesus, she exclaimed: “but this body went to heaven!”

The second point is that the supramental physical is the result of an evolutionary development of matter’s own intrinsic *dharma* (or law) of “involved” Supermind. it is not the outcome of a miraculous superimposition from the Beyond by means of a *siddhi* (special power). The Beyond, in Sri

Aurobindo's vision, descends into a mould prepared by the upward thrust of the concealed or covered within, which holds the same divinity as makes the down-thrust. The Integral Yoga in its fullness is meant to concentrate the evolutionary process into an accelerated revolutionary movement. It is not something achieved, as St. Paul says, "in the twinkling of an eye" during the hoped-for Second Coming of Christ at the world's end and taken up into the Beyond. A new gradually divinised life upon the earth and not a sudden transfiguration breaking with it and passing away from it: such is the Aurobindonian spiritual vision for the future. (1988)

AMAL KIRAN  
(K.D. SETHNA)

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## WHAT DID COLUMBUS DISCOVER?

In 1492 Columbus set sail on his great voyage across the Atlantic. Five hundred years later—in the current year—a lot of discussion has gone on about his discovery. Where exactly did he set foot? What was his own assessment? Interesting light is shed on these questions by the following passage from the *Times Literary Supplement* several years ago

“Was Columbus really a discoverer? If so, what did he discover?

The point, as is very well known, is that the one conclusion Columbus resisted fervently was precisely the discovery with which every schoolboy credits him—a new continent. He had sailed, he was convinced, precisely as he prophesied, to the Indies. His landfall—Cuba to us—was China to his eyes. Thus it is not clear that Columbus thought he had discovered anything at all, rather he had proved what true-blue geography had presupposed all along: the short, westerly route to the Indies.

If then Columbus did not ‘discover America’, who did? Or, indeed, did anyone? It was Vespucci who first penetrated the fog of ‘received common sense’ and saw the new world for what it really was.”

ANON



## A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

Please permit me to add a footnote to the excellent article on LINGUISTIC STATES by Shri Sachchidananda Mohanty in the April number of *Mother India*.

In his Message to the Andhra University on the occasion of the presentation of the Cattamnachi Ramalinga Reddy National Prize to him at the Convocation held at the University on the 11th December 1948 (vide SABCL Vol. 26, pp. 407-13) Sri Aurobindo discusses at length the rationale of the division of India into states on a linguistic basis. He speaks of the absence of political unity in the country and accounts for it. Then he says,

.Then came the British Empire in India which recast the whole country into artificial provinces made for its own convenience, disregarding the principle of division into regional peoples but not abolishing that division. For there had grown up out of the original elements a natural system of sub-nations with different languages, literatures and other traditions of their own, the four Dravidian peoples, Bengal, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Sind, Assam, Orissa, Nepal, the Hindi-speaking peoples of the North, Rajputana and Bihar. .

In taking over the administration from Britain we had inevitably to follow the line of least resistance and proceed on the basis of the artificial British-made provinces, at least for the time; this provisional arrangement now threatens to become permanent, at least in the main and some see an advantage in this permanence. For they think it will help the unification of the country and save us from the necessity of preserving the regional sub-nations which in the past kept the country from an entire and thorough-going unification and uniformity. In a rigorous unification they see the only true union, a single nation with a standardised and uniform administration, language, literature, culture, art, education,—all carried on through the agency of one national tongue...it is doubtful if it is for India truly desirable ... By these differences the country was made the home of many living and pulsating centres of life, art, culture, a richly and brilliantly coloured diversity in unity. the whole nation lived with a full life in its many parts and this increased enormously the creative energy of the whole. There is no possibility any longer that this diversity will endanger or diminish the unity of India

Sri Aurobindo says further that the Congress during the Freedom fight had always favoured the linguistic states. He fully supports the division of states on a linguistic basis.

K B. SITARAMAYYA

## “MY OPERATION AND ESHA’S ROLE IN IT”

AN ACCOUNT BY NIRODBARAN

MANY times in the past as well as recently, some serious physical problems have affected a few of the older sadhaks, making me wonder what the occult reasons for this might be. Material science would scoff at such a concern. But, in the Ashram, spiritual science must take the occult into account, particularly when it is a question of sadhaks who enjoy a fair measure of divine protection.

A case in point is that of K D Sethna (Amal Kiran), the editor of *Mother India*. He himself has written of his experience, describing it so lucidly that I need only touch upon it. He tells he had fallen so many times in his life that he had become used to it. But none of his falls was of such a grave and unusual nature as his latest one. Being such as might have been nearly fatal because of possible arterial damage, it confined him for months to a hospital bed, and then to a wheelchair most of the time.

The second case is my own. It has not been as serious as Sethna’s. But because my condition has occurred at a very advanced age and in a most unexpected manner, I cannot help pondering on the inner forces involved. After all, we are all aware of the definite occult factor in the fracture of Sri Aurobindo’s right thigh-bone. Years ago in a different context, he wrote to me that when the Force started working in the subconscious, no one could predict what the consequences would be among the sadhaks. He meant spiritual consequences, but the turmoil and disturbances one sees in the world would indicate that the physical effects would be no less serious. It would have to be so if the Force were to clear up all the past karmic accumulation in the subconscious of mankind so that a new creation could be built up. I will not probe further into this misty occult domain.

Returning to my own case, I find that the events leading to my operation make a story worth recording. The decision to perform a prostate operation was not a simple or straightforward one. It came about so suddenly that it surprised everyone. Ashramites had been under the impression that I enjoyed excellent health. For years I had been riding around on a bicycle, and exercising regularly, in the playground, even though I was on the way to being a nonagenarian. I did not bother to listen when some friends warned me about cycling in the hectic traffic that now prevails throughout the town. Despite quite a few falls, I still persisted in cycling because each time I fell I escaped with a few scratches.

No wonder the news of my impending operation came to everyone as a bolt from the blue. There were those who advised me not to undertake the risk, but to rely on the Mother’s Grace instead. I myself was averse to drastic surgery, particularly as I was aware of the Mother’s views. According to her, surgery was an act of violence that deranged the whole system psychologically as well as

physically Bearing this in mind, I tried first to avoid, then postpone the operation by taking homoeopathic and ayurvedic drugs All this while, so far as I could see, I had no urgent symptoms calling for surgical intervention

Looking back, it is interesting to note how the first seemingly insignificant symptom appeared when I was serving Sri Aurobindo over forty years ago He had developed a minor eye ailment, and the Mother had asked me to wash his eyes in a simple boric lotion at night Once while I was doing this, I suddenly felt a pressure to urinate I called Champaklal to hold the eye-cup, and ran out of the room in precipitate hurry. So abrupt was my departure that it seemed Sri Aurobindo asked Champaklal what was wrong. Thus started the first traces of my incipient prostate trouble Yet the problem was of such a minor nature that it did not interfere with my service to Sri Aurobindo.

Even after his passing, I was fairly free from the aggravating symptoms that overtake many patients Nevertheless, I consulted my senior colleague and eminent surgeon who had treated Sri Aurobindo: Dr Sanyal After examining me, he pronounced that my prostate was palpably enlarged, but that it was in such a position that it was not likely to cause me much trouble Thus assured, I went on merrily with my normal life untroubled by any discomfort except the need for immediate relief when I felt any pressure on my bladder

Only recently some new symptoms drew my attention to the malady though I could not assess their significance. My medical knowledge was inadequate for such a diagnosis; but I did know that the well-known scourge of old age had caught up with me. I now asked Esha to pray to Sri Aurobindo to rid me of the problem or, if that was not possible, to at least save me from cancer of the prostate, a not so rare complication in cases such as mine

Sri Aurobindo answered with his usual taunting humour that the next time I would ask him to protect me from the onset of leprosy I had on other occasions in the past requested Esha to ask Sri Aurobindo about my physical troubles, as she was so closely in touch with him For instance, last year when she asked him about my need for a cataract operation he replied, “I wish I had known about it earlier, because I could have prevented it. However, it is a simple operation, and he need not be afraid ” Then during the operation I actually saw him sitting in a chair in the room, watching the show Afterwards, when my other eye began to be affected, I appealed to him again, but this time he gave an entirely different answer. He said that, if he intervened and tried to cure, it might produce harmful effects on other organs in the body. (Here some sceptics may ask, “If, as we have heard, Sri Aurobindo was always so concerned about you, how is it that he did not know about your physical problems without having to be told?” I must admit this is a puzzle, but I am reminded of his reply to my suggestion that he should develop some medical knowledge, and so dispense with human help in the medical sphere He replied that he had no latent medico in him, and had no time or need to develop one.)

To return to my recent problem: my symptoms in the beginning were more of a nuisance than anything else. About a year ago, I noticed that I was wetting my bed at night. I used to empty my bladder before retiring, but the incontinence would occur all the same, though intermittently. It would even happen during the day while I was meditating. But the night incontinence was more troublesome because I was sleeping in Sri Aurobindo's room and was afraid of spoiling the carpet.

I now had no choice but to consult an experienced doctor, a good friend of mine. He examined me and found that my bladder was enlarged due to unsuspected retention of urine. This was what was causing the overflow at night. He recommended an ayurvedic drug he had found very helpful in other prostate cases. But when I tried it it did not do much good, and I turned to some homoeopathic doctors I knew. But their medication was only slightly more effective.

Somewhat alarmed, I went to a well-qualified surgeon, who was able to diagnose my condition precisely. He told me that my bladder had become distended due to an obstruction of urine-flow from the enlarged prostate. After further investigation and testing, he advised that I go through with the operation. Now I got a bit scared, for though this procedure had lost all its previous seriousness owing to advances in surgical technique, I still shied away from hospitalisation and all the inconvenience it would entail. For a man who had led a long and active life, being confined to bed for an indefinite period seemed most disagreeable.

So once again I took Esha's help and asked her to appeal to the Guru for his intervention. The Guru gave his verdict in favour of an operation, and observed that otherwise I might lose the use of my legs. In spite of this unhappy prognosis, I could still not persuade myself to take his advice. I felt I had not given homoeopathy a fair trial.

Meanwhile, my doctor was already planning to send me to Madras where he knew a leading surgeon. But I did not favour the idea, and much preferred to be operated upon in Jipmer, if an operation turned out to be the only recourse. As for the doctor who would perform the surgery, we came to know that there was a very good young surgeon in attendance at Jipmer—though not as experienced as the Madras specialist—but that he was on leave. In this event, I was directed to another Jipmer surgeon for his opinion. He confirmed the diagnosis, but advised that scanning be done before taking a final decision regarding an operation.

When the scan was completed, it revealed quite an enlarged prostate and a bladder so distended that it occupied almost half of the lower abdomen, and held a fair amount of residual urine. It was indeed quite a serious picture indicating as early an operation as possible.

In spite of everything, I continued to be hesitant, even though I knew of a friend of mine who had had his prostate removed about two years ago by an

eminent surgeon and was discharged from hospital in a few days

On the other hand, I recalled the case of another close friend with a sudden prostate obstruction. In his case, Dr Sanyal advised an immediate operation. The patient referred his case to the Mother and affirmed that he would abide by her decision, as he was a strong believer in her power. She advised him against any surgical intervention, and told him he would be protected if he had unshaken faith in the divine power.

I thus found myself in a dilemma. On one side, Sri Aurobindo had given his clear verdict, and on the other the Mother had been known to oppose any surgical interference with the body. I had no alternative but to refer my problem again to the Guru. But this time his reply was enigmatic. He said that he would concur with whatever I decided.

*(To be continued)*

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## SOMETHING

SOMETHING is happening to my eyes;  
 Whatever objects I see  
 Leap in sudden surprise  
 And look back strangely at me  
     Am I looking out?  
     Am I looking in?  
     Really, I know not,  
     The gap is very thin  
 Rhythms from depths of the seas  
 Flout the paces of years;  
 Dins hush, noises cease,  
 Something’s happened to my ears  
     A sweet thrill I taste,  
     Joy and warmth feel,  
     A oneness subtle and chaste  
     That my senses conceal  
 There’s a music in the chasm.  
 A haunt in the breeze;  
 My lonely microcosm  
 Has sprung a million me’s.

AKASH DESHPANDE

# LABOUR OF LOVE

BY HUTA

*(Continued from the issue of June 1992)*

DAYS flew too quickly Now I was preparing to leave England

I happened to meet quite a number of interesting men who proposed to me, but I refused.

The Mother was informed in this regard. I also wrote a letter to my friend Mrs Saralaben Shah of Bombay:

“Never will I get married, never do I wish to fall into that delusion I recall the Mother’s letter which she wrote in 1956

‘You are born for the Divine and you will find the Divine ’

This was true and will always remain true. Let the Mother’s Will be fulfilled I will make the most of my life. I know my loyalty is put to the test. But Huta will ever remain Huta—‘The offered one ’ ”

During my stay in the Ashram for almost four years I met with hideous difficulties both outward and inward. I was aware of hardship in the Ashram Besides, my parents were anxious about my life as I was young. They permitted me to find a companion of my own choice.

Indeed, some men were most attractive, well-dressed, well-educated, well-mannered, and there was something dashing and jaunty about them

I might have easily accepted one of these gentlemen’s proposal, got married and settled abroad. But my soul stood its ground.

\*

A letter dated 7-7-60 came from the Mother:

“My dear little child Huta,

As far as I know I have answered your letters, but both ways some may have been lost. This one also I do not know if it will reach you in time before you leave England

I have received the nice things you have sent through Laljibhai’s son, and was hesitating to write as he told me that you would soon leave London But now I have your letter in which you say you have received nothing from me since a long time, so I venture to send this letter

I know nothing about the pin I did not send you any. I am glad that you are all right and coming back soon With my love and blessings always.”

\*

My father wished me to visit the Continent. But now I was eager to be back home. My parents wanted me to visit them in East Africa. So on 15th July 1960 I bade adieu to London.

I stayed three days in Jinja (Uganda) at my second brother's house, then I went to Miwani (Kenya) where I met my parents. They inquired about my studies and stay in London. I never told them my difficulties, setbacks and sufferings.

Days passed with monotonous slowness. I felt bored. My only refuge was the richness of Nature which she conveyed to me in her silent, secret, sweet way.

The Mother sent me a lovely card depicting the painting of a mauve Iris-flower on white satin. Her words were:

“The Aristocracy of Beauty.  
With love and blessings.”

I was longing to see the Mother.

So much entertainment, so many diversions, yet I could not set my heart on anything.

My parents were worried and suggested to me several times to consider marriage. How to explain myself to them?

Our house was surrounded by huge mountains I wanted to climb the peak of one of them and shout and scream at the top of my voice: “I DO NOT WANT TO GET MARRIED—LEAVE ME ALONE.” But I was silent and refused to answer any questions. More and more I felt suffocated among my own people, relatives, friends. I was aloof, withdrawn. I realised that I never belonged to any of them. Nevertheless I appreciated their good will with a thankful heart.

On 1st August 1960 I left Miwani for India.

I was anxiously awaiting the unfoldment of the next phase of my life. These words of Sri Aurobindo were really encouraging:

“So the Light grows always. As for the shadow, it is only a shadow and will disappear in the growing Light.”

*(To be continued)*

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# THE TRUTH ABOUT THE TAJ

## Taj Mahal The Illumined Tomb

(An Anthology of 17th century Mughal and European sources Edited by W.E. Begley & Z.A. Desai Published by The Aga Khan Programme for Islamic Architecture, Rs. 320 )

At first glance (and a quick flip) through this excellently produced, printed and illustrated anthology of over 300 pages one gets the impression of it being an excuse for producing a coffee table glossy on the Taj Mahal. On closer examination this does not seem to be the case. On noting that it is sponsored by the Aga Khan Programme for Islamic Architecture one realises that no effort has been spared to finance the conversion of an "anthology" into a profusely illustrated and comprehensive compendium not only on the Taj Mahal, but on the very character of the Emperor Shahjahan. As Begley states at the end of his introduction, "somewhere between the negative European gossip and the image of the perfection painted in the Moghul sources may lie the truth about Shahjahan and the Illumined Tomb (rauza-i-munnavvara), the search for which is the primary objective of this anthology "

The spectrum between the image of perfection and the negative gossip as presented in the anthology is indeed a wide one. While a Mughal description of the Emperor refers to him as "His Majesty the Khaqani, the inheritor of the Kingdom of Solomon, the climber of the steps of honour and glory, the full-moon of the skies of magnificence and fortune, the knight in the field of firm Faith, the Sun of Religion and the world, the Refuge of Islam and Helper of Muslims," Manucci almost revels in scandal stories about him. In one place he even states that "for the greater satisfaction of his lusts Shahjahan ordered the erection of a large hall twenty cubits long and eight cubits wide adorned throughout with great mirrors. At the corners of the mirrors hung great clusters of pearls and the walls were of jasper stone." "All this expenditure" according to him "was made so that he (Shahjahan) might obscenely observe himself and his favourite women."

In arriving at his own truth the reader could take heed of Begley's explicit warning, "If the European sources are generally unreliable in their descriptions of the Taj, their accounts and interpretations of people and events are even more suspect "

To help the reader make an objective assessment of his own, Begley and Desai have presented their material in a most orderly manner. Whether it is also exhaustive is beyond the judgement of this non-epigraphist-archaeologist-reviewer. The material is organised under the subheads of Mughal histories and



documents, inscriptions on the Taj, writings of European travellers and the collated biographical information on the calligrapher and the architect of the Taj. In the case of histories, the author has quoted largely from the court-appointed Royal historians such as Qazwini, Lahori, Kalim, Salih, and Tabataba'i. The quoted documents largely relate to Royal "Farman" and "Hukums" while the European sources are the travelogues of Mundy, Manrique, Bernier, Manucci, Tavernier and Therenot. The above documentary material is complemented and reinforced by exhaustive coverage of the inscriptions on the Taj duly photographed and translated in eminently readable verse form. The book ends with some hitherto unknown documents (which to the present reviewer are the most illuminating part of the publication) relating to the architect, the supervisor of the construction and the calligrapher of the building.

Thus, for the epigraphist, archaeologist and archivist there is a wealth of neatly organised material to scrutinise, criticise and hold scholarly discussion. Surprisingly even to the layman and the bureaucrat casually reading through this, it would at times be amusing and at times revealing to see how the Mughal bureaucratic system (substantiated by innumerable bureaucratic notes, endorsements, recommendations, etc., without which even a royal dictate was not worth the paper on which it was written) is faithfully followed to the present day and continues to harass the common man, our democratic system notwithstanding. While in the Mughal days at least even the bitterest pill was coated with the politest of flowery language, today it is reduced merely to the usually turgid comments, as we contemporary architect supplicants know so well.

To this reviewer it is the 30-page introduction and the 20 pages devoted to Amanat Khan the calligraphist and Ustad Ahmed Lahori, designated architect of the Taj, that make the most revealing and lively reading. It is not surprising to note that on plans submitted by the architect to Shahjahan the latter "himself writes down his sacred judicious notes to serve as a guide for the building overseers and architects of buildings." Add to that the judicious appointment of responsible administrative staff for overseeing projects and one realises that the recipe for achieving great architecture—"a keen client, an efficient administrator, a good architect and capable builder"—was as true then as today. One wonders whether it is the lack of one (or is it all?) of the above that results in the largely shabby public buildings of today.

On another level, the great controversy regarding the architects of the Taj Mahal is resolved in the most disarming manner by Begley. He refers to a few documents written by the son of one Ustad Ahmed Lahori, and accepts the son's contention that his father was the architect of the Taj. By today's mores, nasty aspersions of nepotism would be cast on such a document before its acceptance as sufficient proof. However, the way the material is presented Begley's contention seems quite plausible. Anyway the fatuous claims of a European having been the architect are indeed convincingly demolished. Further, without

directly stating it the claims of P.N. Oak, the chauvinistic Hindu theorist, who has advanced the thesis of the Taj being a Hindu palace, are equally well laid to rest. The documented correspondence between Shahjahan and Raja Jai Singh, establishes clearly that Jai Singh donated only the land on which the Taj was built, not with a Hindu palace already built on it.

This otherwise voluminous collection of documentation on the Taj highlights another pertinent point. All documents presented are of a historical or bureaucratic nature, there being nothing on the theory of the architectural design. It is only a confirmation of the peculiar fact that while Islam produced great architecture it never encouraged any theoretical treatises to be prepared as did other eastern civilisations such as the Hindu, Chinese or Japanese. An interesting facet of Islam's attitude to buildings, worth pondering over

Being an architect historian myself, I finally must quote with envy Begley's brief but all-encompassing description of the Illumined Tomb; "The Taj Mahal complex clearly stands as the logical culmination of the earlier Moghul tradition, combining bold engineering and massive scale with formal elegance and totally co-ordinated design of flawless visual symmetry." And lastly, the only flaw one noticed in the entire presentation is the uncoordinated and incorrect dimensioning of the otherwise excellent plans, elevations and sections of the Taj.

SATISH GROVER

(*The Indian Express*, Magazine, 14 10 90, p 4, originally captioned  
"Who really built the Taj?")

## SRI AUROBINDO AND SCIENCE

THIS subject of Sri Aurobindo and science is among the most difficult to write about since whatever is written here is bound to be something that is already widely known and there is hardly anything new to add. All one can do is to quote the insightful words of Sri Aurobindo as regards the subject with commentaries which can be incomplete at best and leave it at that.

Science is a truly vast subject encompassing many disciplines ranging from the most mundane to the most esoteric. Science has enabled man to move mountains, conquer disease and pain, fly to the Moon, unleash the unimaginably dangerous and powerful energies locked within atoms, and made him capable of total and complete self-annihilation. Man knows how to promote death through science but his efforts to conquer death have come to nought so far.

With the help of science man has turned his ever-widening vision from the farthest reaches of the known universe to the minutest “micro-verse” of an atom in a constant search of something which will always keep on eluding him. Even during the search for that something in the external universe, man has often turned his searching gaze within for an answer to this riddle within the bounds of life and mind. In spite of all his technological prowess, man has still not been able to fathom the profoundest depths of this inner universe using all his skills including mathematics which can define quanta, periods, frequencies, energies, effects and phenomena in transcendental terms of matrices, series, algorithms and theorems.

Scientists keep trying to unravel the mysteries of this universe and make use of the knowledge so gained for either the benefit or detriment of mankind. For them science may be much more than this and yet it is mostly to do with the physical universe as perceived directly or indirectly by our physical senses. There are other scientific subjects like psychiatry which try to deal with the immensely complex mind at an as yet immature level, lacking the deep insights offered by true seers like Sri Aurobindo who was a super-scientist belonging to a uniquely spiritual domain which encompasses a “multi-verse” as opposed to the mere “uni-verse” of the scientists.

Our concept of a universe is the world we see with our rather narrow perceptual capabilities. As an older child, I remember climbing on the roof of our house in East Africa at night and lying down to look at the stars. As total darkness shrouded everything below the level of the roof there was nothing visible except the star-studded sky. The feeling I got then was an extremely peaceful one of floating very calmly in an endless space with the stars twinkling in their mysterious ways. As far as I was concerned I was totally at peace within and without even as a tiny denizen of an extremely vast universe which was well beyond the limited understanding of my child-like intellect but it was indeed an instant “*identity with the infinite*” as put by Sri Aurobindo.

The mind, being what it is, began to question what I saw. How big is this seemingly endless expanse confronting me? Are we alone in this universe? Are there other sun-like stars with earth-like planets with man-like creatures inhabiting them? If I go to the furthest reaches of what I could perceive, will it reveal even further unreachable realms? Logic agreed almost intuitively with this concept but without the actual experience of those far reaches of outer space the logic remained dryly insipid. For me it was the first experience of an endless infinity and its appreciation as a concrete fact of life which has remained very vividly in my mind.

Even today, this subject of outer space has maintained a strange fascination for me with many mental forays into the unknown through the medium of science-fiction books which do teach some facts of science through interesting fiction. Authors like Carl Sagan attempt to explain extra-terrestrial life in space. The most interesting fact mentioned by Carl Sagan was that of immortality at the most physical level. He says that the atoms which constitute a human body have always existed for millions of years before its birth and they will continue to exist virtually unchanged for millions of years after its eventual death. From that point of view one is indeed immortal. One may even accept this notion of pseudo-immortality at a purely materialistic level but emotionally there is obviously something very important lacking.

A body made of atoms is after all merely a body. Atoms are neither good nor bad and they do not seem to contain anything which can initiate the breath of life or emotions in a body. So there is this tangible but scientifically undefinable concept of qualitative quantities like life and mind. Do remember that even if life decides to depart from this conglomeration of various atoms called the body, the atoms will always remain as they were even when the body disintegrates. So life appears to be some sort of a consciously cohesive force which holds these atoms together in the form of a body. The mind is, of course, totally undefinable at this atomic level.

These atoms within a body cannot be easily destroyed but if a successful attempt is made to annihilate them a tremendous release of energy in the form of a powerful explosion takes place.  $E = MC^2$  or matter equals energy was proved by Albert Einstein through his experiments conducted initially at a purely mental level, that is, through thought experiments as he preferred to call them. He was proved completely right in a wholly inappropriate manner at Hiroshima and Nagasaki whose unfortunate history does not warrant repetition here.

The ancient Hindu sages also knew this vitally important fact but from a totally opposite spiritual perspective as they have always maintained that everything including this universe is a manifestation of Divine Shakti, which is to say energy equals matter. Sri Aurobindo states, "All the world, according to Science, is nothing but a play of energy—a material Energy it used to be called, but it is now doubted whether matter, scientifically speaking, exists except as a

phenomenon of Energy. All the world, according to Vedanta, is a play of a power of a spiritual entity, the power of an original consciousness, whether it be Maya or Shakti, and the result an illusion or real. In the world so far as man is concerned we are aware only of mind-energy, life-energy, energy in Matter: but it is supposed that there is a spiritual energy or force also behind them from which they originate. All things in either case, are the results of a Shakti, energy or force. There is no action without a Force or Energy doing the action and bringing about its consequence.”<sup>1</sup>

This is almost like paraphrasing Einstein’s equation to affirm that even a single particle of the grossest matter is an indivisible part of the Universal Divine. Therefore we can indeed say that the body is intrinsically divine even though we may not be at all conscious of this patent fact. It may be this latent awareness or consciousness of its innate divinity which animates this seemingly lifeless aggregate of atoms in a body. “If there were no creative power in the material energy, there would be no material universe. Matter is not unconscious or without dynamism—only it is an involved force and consciousness that work in it,”<sup>2</sup> says Sri Aurobindo. He also says: “Obviously, if material energies alone can exist in the material world, there can be no possibility of a life divine on the Earth.”<sup>3</sup>

Truly it is this extremely powerful element of consciousness manifesting itself through life which has influenced the course of gradual evolution through a prolonged series of progressive transformations. Charles Darwin expounded the theory of evolution which shook the traditional beliefs to the core and paved the way towards greater understanding of the immense adaptability of life under various circumstances. We know now that air-breathing mammals like whales did decide consciously to return to the sea and this power of consciousness did indeed provide the impetus to eventually retransform them into dwellers of the sea.

As regards evolution, Sri Aurobindo says, “A progressive evolution of the visible and invisible instruments of the Spirit is the whole law of the earth nature. Spirit has concealed itself in inconscient matter. It evolves into forms of matter by the working of matter forces. It is only when this has been sufficiently done, that it thinks of life. A subconscious life and its imprisoned forces were there all the time in matter and its forces. Afterwards came an evolution of mind in many forms by the working of liberated mind-forces. In those life-forces in matter and even in the very substance of matter mind was latent. An evolution of mind in the living form by a working of liberated mind-forces was the third chapter of the story. The third chapter is not completed, neither will it be the end of the narrative.”<sup>4</sup> He says further, “The supramental change is a thing decreed and inevitable in the evolution of the earth-consciousness; for its upward ascent is not ended and mind is not its last summit.”<sup>5</sup>

The scientists tell us of life evolving from sea-dwelling creatures to amphi-

brates to animals and finally man replete with an intelligence endowed by a manifested mind. It is indeed very strange that the Hindu mythological story of Dashavatar or ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu bears a very striking resemblance to the same progressively evolutionary steps. The first avatar was a fish (Matsyavatar) followed by an amphibian turtle (Kurkutavatar). These were followed by a boar (Varahavatar), a half-man half-lion (Narshimhavatar), a dwarf (Vamanavatar), Parshurama, Rama, Krishna, and Buddha as the last recorded avatar. The tenth and final avatar is either about to manifest or as yet unmanifest. It is as if the ancient sages already knew, either by an inner vision or by intuition, of the progressions of evolutionary transformation and mention Kalki as the ultimate avatar towards which it is headed. Sri Aurobindo writes that "an Avatar, roughly speaking, is one who is conscious of the presence and power of the Divine born in him or descended into him and governing from within his will and life and action; he feels identified inwardly with this Divine power and presence."<sup>6</sup>

So we now know the final goal of this continually transformative evolution thanks to the teaching of Sri Aurobindo who presages the advent of superman. The keyword here is transformation on which Sri Aurobindo dwells at length while expounding supramental transformation. The mind as it presently manifests itself is no doubt at a higher level than the pseudo-animalistic level which was just barely capable of initiating a slow transformation of the type accomplished by the whales as already mentioned above. However to achieve supermanhood, even the present highly evolved mental state is hardly adequate. What is required at this stage of evolution is a much more potent propelling force to accelerate this evolutionary process.

But why is a propelling force needed? Sir Isaac Newton, an extremely astute scientist whose forte was mostly occultism, alchemy and philosophy rather than physics or mathematics, probably knew the answer to this almost spiritual question and yet chose to explain it in purely physical and mathematical terms. Newton's laws of motion are already very widely known as they form an essential part of scientific education. Newton's law of inertia states that a body will continue to remain in its current state in the absence of a force acting on it. The body will accelerate or deviate from its course if an external force acts on it. As already mentioned above, Sri Aurobindo has stated that there is no action without a Force or Energy doing the action and bringing about its consequence. Similarly one can almost restate these very same laws in cosmic terms and easily propound laws of cosmic inertia and cosmic forces.

In a similar fashion, what Sri Aurobindo wanted to accomplish was to overcome this cosmic state of evolutionary inertia by an application of supramental force to accelerate that rather pedestrian evolution. Note that he does not depend on the next foreseeable or predictable evolutionary step towards an overmind, but goes beyond that to the supermind to tap the limitless power or

energy of that super-consciousness. So to become a superman as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo it is an essential condition to develop a super-consciousness which can completely control not only the atoms at the most material level of human existence but much more by incorporating the vital and mental levels as well.

Let us look at atoms once again in greater detail and appreciate that atoms themselves consist of components like electrons, protons, neutrons, mesons, muons, neutrinos and positrons, to name a few. In turn these also consist of even tinier components which defy definition in terms of particles or perception as pure energy. Even while examining a single electron, it is difficult to say with any degree of certainty that it is a particle or a wave of pure energy at any given time. Heisenberg has already elucidated this peculiar behaviour of such atomic particles in his principle of uncertainty

Now imagine a human body consisting of these atoms, the constituents of which decide simultaneously to manifest themselves in unison as pure energy, instead of a random conglomeration of particles and energy. One can almost perceive that body disappearing in a flash of blinding light whose intensity would exceed the brilliance of millions of suns blazing together. It would be a truly catastrophic event being equivalent to an uncontrolled nuclear fission of an atom bomb. Then the body would be destroyed completely and nothing remain after this tremendous burst of energy has dissipated itself

The scientists know how to control this process of nuclear fission by various external physical means but how can one control consciously this tremendous amount of purely physical energy which is locked up within the human body? The simple answer to this is, by the sheer power of pure consciousness. If one can consciously direct all the atoms of the human body to manifest themselves as pure energy or Divine Shakti, then one has an almost limitless power to accomplish absolutely anything at all. As a highly conscious being of pure energy one can traverse the entire length of our vast universe at the speed of thought. One can manifest oneself in any transmogrified form instantly. One can walk through walls and perform incredibly miraculous feats. One can indeed control completely this unlimited energy within, at one's disposal, with the help of this pure consciousness.

This consciously harmonious unison of atoms reminds one of a laser. The laser emits a tightly focussed beam of coherent light at a particular wavelength. Before the laser can emit this ultra-pure coherent light, it has to be pumped with diffused energy from an external power source containing even greater energy. Note that there is a concentration of diffusive energy into a more ordered form of energy. Since the body of the laser is in the form of a highly organised structure, it can absorb this imposed extra energy up to a limit and when the surplus amount of energy just cannot be contained, it flows out in one harmonious wave-like motion. The phenomenon cannot take place if the laser material was disordered and it would then merely dissipate the energy pumped

into it in a useless way. The harmonious light of a laser is capable of performing varied and useful tasks like cutting through steel or repairing the extremely fragile retina in the human eye or initiating difficult photo-chemical reactions or measuring the vast distance between the Moon and the Earth with extreme accuracy.

This process of receiving energy in scientific terms can be explained by an analogy which holds good only within very limited terms of reference. Consider a perfect goblet of pure crystal which produces a beautifully pristine tone when struck gently with a hard object. If this goblet is subjected to a very faint note of the same frequency, it will gradually begin to resound the same note by resonance and eventually build up an amplitude of such magnitude that the goblet could even shatter when it is no longer able to contain or dissipate the energy to which it is subjected. This resonance takes place if and only if the goblet is perfectly in tune with the imposed sound. If the goblet has a defect like a tiny crack, it will not be able to ring true and in fact dampen the imposed sound rather than reinforcing it.

This process of resonance is extremely well known in many disciplines like sonics, radio, and television and it also finds a place in the spiritual realms. An aspirant tunes his mind, body and spirit to a Divine Note to receive the transformational energy by sheer resonance—a resonance which will eventually lead to a transformation by changing the purely physical term of existence and entering the realms of pure spirit. Like the perfect goblet, only the perfect instrument can attain this spiritually resonant state.

Sri Aurobindo also mentions a highly disciplined and ordered yogic approach with a huge capacity of receiving the supramental energy to be a sort of resonant human laser of consciousness. He says, "The higher consciousness is a concentrated consciousness, concentrated in the Divine Unity and the working out of the Divine Will, not dispersed and rushing about after this or that mental idea or vital desire or physical need as in the ordinary human consciousness—also not invaded by a hundred haphazard thoughts, feelings, and impulses, but master of itself, centred and harmonious."<sup>7</sup>

Such an intense concentration of energy is tantamount to transmutation or condensing of this dissipational energy into a physical or material form in accordance with the fact that energy is matter. Compare this with what Sri Aurobindo has to say about being born without the intervention of purely biological processes. After mentioning the subtle physical that lies behind gross matter, Sri Aurobindo writes, "It should be possible and it is believed to be possible for an object formed in this subtle physical to make a transit from its subtlety into the state of gross Matter directly by the intervention of an occult force and process whether with or even without the assistance or intervention of some gross material procedure. A soul wishing to enter into a body or form for itself a body and take part in a divine life upon earth might be assisted to do so or



even provided with such a form by this method of direct transmutation without passing through birth by the sex-process or undergoing any degradation.”<sup>8</sup>

Scientists are the veritable seekers of truth at a purely material level knowing sufficiently well that science, having apparently nothing substantial to investigate beyond the microcosm of sub-atomic particles, alone does not provide all the answers to questions that border the unmanifested bounds of spiritual reality. Sri Aurobindo was indeed a great scientist of a newly pristine and superbly transcendental science of consciousness who pursued his inner investigations well beyond the realms of the present sciences.

To conclude, a final quotation from Sri Aurobindo which sums up many of the thoughts expressed above—“Science itself has come to a conclusion that it cannot, as it once hoped, determine what is the truth of the things or their real nature, or what is behind physical phenomena; it can only deal with the process of physical things and how they come about or on what lines men can deal with and make use of them. In other words, the field of physical science has been now definitely marked off and limited and questions about God or the ultimate Reality or other metaphysical or spiritual problems are outside it.”<sup>9</sup>

SURESH HINDOCHA

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# QUANTUM AND THE ENORMOUS CHANGE

*(Continued from the issue of June 1992)*

## DE BROGLIE AND MATTER-WAVES

WHAT we have just seen indicates clearly that for the last 25 years science walked on a path of dilemma and paradox. This is reflected in the fact that Planck never received the due recognition he deserved, and Einstein had to wait for 17 years before he was awarded the Nobel Prize for his contributions to the understanding of the quantum nature of light. Nevertheless, it looks that this period—between the conceptual break made by Planck and the coming of the Compton effect—was a crucial phase in the history of human thought since man's mental consciousness was undergoing a radical change.

At the end of this testing phase science widened and strengthened its base, the horizon extending to encompass the newly discovered ideas, rather strange in nature but compelling in their persuasion. It had matured and outgrown the 19th century bias or prejudice towards materialism and the gross conventional notions of the physical world.

It was this change in attitude that played the catalyst in the years to come. While it took 23 years for the final confirmation of the light-quantum hypothesis, the revolutionary suggestion of matter-waves got established just within 3 years from the moment it was proposed in 1924.

Although this revolutionary proposition of matter-waves was first projected on the scientific community in 1924, by Louis de Broglie, the story of his important work can be traced back to 1911, or even earlier. The first Solvay Congress had just ended, and Louis's elder brother—a scientist by profession and the secretary of the Congress—had returned home from this session with documents on the latest developments in the frontiers of science. In these figured the contributions of Planck and Einstein regarding the quantum nature of light. Fascinated by these papers, 19-year old Louis instantly switched interests: he abandoned literature and history to take up theoretical physics. Ever since then he closely followed the developments in science and in 1924 immortalized himself by contributing to our fundamental understanding of the physical world.

Strange but true, it was his initial love for literature that sowed the seeds of a revolution. He had cultivated the faculty of imagination as well as acquired a fine sense for presentation. Their combination played a crucial role in the 1924 thesis in which he suggested that matter can exhibit wave characteristics. This is clearly seen in the very own words of his teacher and guide Paul Langevin: "His [de Broglie's] ideas, of course, are nonsensical but he develops them with such elegance and brilliance that I have accepted his thesis."

Surely, the idea of matter-waves at first does seem absurd and nonsensical, but the scientific community could not disregard it altogether. Three specific reasons supported the stance of contemporary scientists. Firstly, it was the backing of Langevin where he deeply felt that no nonsense could be presented with [such] elegance and brilliance, secondly the scientific community had recognised the important role of  $h$ , the quantum of action, by using which de Broglie explained the existence of matter waves, thirdly and most importantly, the intellectual climate had changed.

It has often been suggested that this new idea of matter-waves was an intuitive perception or merely a lucky revelation. Also there could be an obvious schoolboy-like query "If light can be considered both as wave and particle, then why not matter too?"

It could have well been so, but the hypothesising of a new scientific idea, if it has to be taken seriously, requires more than just intuition or luck; the support of some well-established feature. And this de Broglie found in one of the most successful theoretical presentations in the history of modern science; Bohr's planetary model of the atom (1913) is what he took for the testing of his idea. We do indeed find in Einstein a most gratifying comment on Bohr's piece of scientific art, the "highest musicality of mind" Einstein was not only indicating the beauty and harmony in Bohr's work, but was suggesting that false mental conceptions (theories) neither do nor can become harmonious. Thus de Broglie could have, in addition to the support of a well-established model, the backing of the greatest mind, both broad and open, of the day: Einstein.

A particular property of this atomic model is that electrons can move only in certain fixed orbits. Bohr had come to this conclusion by proposing the quantization of angular momentum of the electron. De Broglie pondered over this and questioned if the property of fixed orbits can also be explained in terms of matter-waves—in this case standing electron-waves. If he could tackle this question to conclude an affirmative answer, then he would successfully relate particles and waves in an interconvertible manner. And lo! he did strike the nail right on the head.

De Broglie adopted the picture of stationary states for his matter-waves. Thus for a stationary electron (wave) orbit it can be said that the crest of the travelling wave will reappear exactly at the same point at the completion of every revolution around the nucleus. This automatically suggests that the ratio of perimeter of the orbit and the wavelength are interconnected to determine the stability. And as the wavelength of the electron-wave is fixed, the orbit—or in other words the distance of the orbit from the nucleus—becomes the determining factor. Thus de Broglie concluded that for a stable electron wave there can exist only particular orbits.

So was the atom redetermined in terms of matter-waves and theoretically the existence of the electron-wave proved.

But what exactly prompted de Broglie to think of matter-waves in general?

Planck suggested the quantization of light energy, which he expressed in the formula:

$$E = h\nu. \quad (1)$$

Einstein extended this view and gave to the energy packet the status of a particle. In that process the energy of each packet became the kinetic energy of the light-particle

$$E = pc. \quad (2)$$

( $p$  = momentum,  $c$  particle velocity, in this case light velocity.) The final turnout of the Einstein formula is:

$$p = h\nu/c. \quad (3)$$

This last equation can be rewritten in terms of  $h$  and  $\lambda$  (lambda) by using the formula  $\lambda\nu = c$ . What we get is:

$$p = h/\lambda \quad (4)$$

In equation (3) we do observe that the role of  $c$  is inescapable. But what happens if we look at equation (4)? By itself this equation expresses the momentum of a particle in terms of wavelength. This can be rewritten as

$$\lambda = h/p$$

or

$$\lambda = h/mv \quad (5)$$

This equation is a generalization to fit all of matter rather than just some abstract light-particle. In this equation we also see how matter is related to the wave—the momentum of a particular particle is related to a wavelength.

This is what struck de Broglie when he observed equation (3) and he rewrote it in the form of equation (5). Equation 5 is known as de Broglie's wave equation.

### Experiment and change

When de Broglie presented his PhD thesis for scrutiny the scientific world had grown less skeptical and reserved. But there is more to this, the emergence of a positive attitude, a new outlook of mind upon the physical world. In a genuine desire to understand the nature of matter, contemporaries no more disregarded or discarded new scientific ideas without thorough experimentation. The ball was now in the court of the experimentalists to see if there could be any observation in support to these new ideas. Within three years G. P. Thomson in England, and Davisson and Germer in the United States, independently confirmed de Broglie's prediction. Strange again, Millikan had taken ten years to verify Einstein's proposal regarding the quantum nature of light, whereas these three did so within a span of three years.

The dual nature of light was now pushed to the domain of matter proper. Our understanding about the physical world once again acquired a dramatic

turn Probing into the depth of the “real” nature of matter man’s mind once again demanded widening The intellectual climate and the attitude of the scientific community towards “intangible” new ideas had climbed the heights so that the development in the “particle” world was rapidly reaching a new peak.

The electron was the smallest known particle at the moment de Broglie came up with this new hypothesis of his. Moreover, he explained the existence of matter-waves through Bohr’s atom; thus most naturally the electron became the first target for the verification of the new proposal. In addition to this the measuring instruments were not powerful enough to detect the wavelength of any other known particle.

When the neutron was discovered by Chadwick, in the year 1932, it was natural to subject it to de Broglie’s ideas and associate a wavelength to it. Indeed this was established successfully when neutrons became available in plenty from nuclear reactors. Neutron waves have now become a powerful tool in studying crystal and molecular structures by diffraction techniques. This definitely constitutes a great confirmation for the idea of matter waves.

We once again highlight the most crucial and unavoidable role played by  $h$ —Planck’s constant—in de Broglie’s work. If the photoelectric effect provided a significant justification for the role of  $h$  in the theories of light, the same became true in the hypothesis of matter-waves. The microscopic world is certainly governed by  $h$  and its presence must have manifested inevitably in all its explorations. De Broglie merited the credit for it in the domain of matter proper and not just in dynamics as we see in the Bohr-atom.

To summarize. We saw how the study of the black-body radiation of an object led to the birth of the quantum of action at the hands of Planck. Next, these packets of energy acquired the identity of a particle when Einstein set off to explain the photoelectric effect. This hinted at the dual nature of light. This was followed by de Broglie’s proposition of matter-waves. All along we also studied the acceptability of new ideas and we found that in sharp contrast to the Einstein-Planck era the acceptability was liberal at the time of de Broglie. Yet, viewing this acceptability of new ideas in a broader perspective, we do find that the Einstein-Planck era was far more liberal than the days of Galileo and Copernicus. We shall now clock back into the lives and works of some scientists of that early period that ushered the birth of modern science—Bruno, Galileo, Copernicus, Kepler, and Newton.

*(End of Part I)*

VIKAS DHANDHANIA

## SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of June 1992)

1905—a black year for the Bengalis; the division of Bengal, over which controversy raged not only in Bengal but in the whole of India, gave the much-needed impetus to the slumbering Nationalist Movement of the country. The early leaders of the Congress, though they possessed intellectual acumen, were not aware of the inherent conflict of interests between the alien rulers and the subject population. The fundamental weakness was that they had an implicit faith in the British Rule in India. In an article “India’s Duty to England”, the *Hindu Patriot* (April 8, 1878) editorially commented as follows: “Our rulers may rest assured that the symptoms of dissatisfaction which they notice among the princes and people of India are no symptoms of a wish for a political revolution... Both the princes and people of India fully appreciate the order which the English have introduced, the protection and security which they have given, and the principles of progress which they have instilled into life.”\*

This single act of Lord Curzon drove the first nail in the coffin of political mendicancy and faith in British Justice. In his book *The New Spirit in India*, Henry W. Nevinson, an English M.P., who had an interview with Sri Aurobindo during his study-visit to India as a special correspondent of *The Daily News* of London, has recorded Sri Aurobindo’s reaction to the Partition in these words:

“He regarded the Partition of Bengal as the greatest blessing that had ever happened to India. No other measure could have stirred national feeling so deeply or roused it so suddenly from the lethargy of previous years. He lamented the long peace, leading to degeneracy and effeminate ways. Under it the ordinary people had sought only after prosperity and material comfort, while the thoughtful men spent their time in aesthetic circles, admiring Shelley and Swinburne, or imitating them. The more English a man was the more he counted himself successful and the life-blood of nationalism had run thin. But all this torpor and smug contentment had been rudely interrupted by the disguised blessings of Lord Curzon’s error. Indignation had again created patriotism when apparently it was dead, and the Party’s whole policy was aimed at carrying forward the work that Lord Curzon had so successfully begun for the revival of national character and spirit.”

The Partition Scheme was first mooted in 1903, but there was such a storm of protest all over Bengal and elsewhere that Lord Curzon thought it prudent to lie low for a time, but securing the consent of the Secretary of State he had the act passed by the Legislative Council on 20th July 1905 and issued the Gazette

\* Vide J. K. Majumdar’s *Indian Speeches and Documents on British Rule 1821-1918*, Calcutta, 1957, p. 186, and the author’s Bengali pamphlet, *Swadeshi Andolan*, Calcutta, 1953, pp. 23-25.

Notification on 29th September. The whole Act was foisted on the public as a *fait accompli* on the 16th October 1905. "On that day," wrote Henry Nevinson in *The New Spirit in India*, "thousands and thousands of Indians rub dust or ashes on their foreheads; at dawn they bathe in silence as at a sacred fast; no meals are eaten; the shops in cities and the village bazars are shut; women refuse to cook; they lay aside their ornaments; men bind each other's wrists with a yellow string as a sign that they will never forget the shame; and the whole day is passed in resentment, mourning, and the anger of the humiliation."

"What was the Partition of Bengal, really? It was an ostensible attempt to reduce the size of the Province of Bengal in the interest of efficient administration. By this regrouping the Chittagong Division and the districts of Dacca and Mymensingh (these are now part of Bangladesh) were transferred from Bengal to the Province of Assam. These transferred areas had a large Muslim population, though it was Bengali to the core and it was argued on its behalf that by separating East Bengal from the West, greater attention could be bestowed upon the Muslim interests. Here was a barefaced move to drive a wedge between Muslims and Hindus or, putting it in another way, between Bengalis and Bengalis in the name of religion and that too against the wishes of the majority of East Bengalis themselves."<sup>1</sup>

As Lord Ronaldsday says in his book *Life of Curzon*, the Partition was "a subtle attack upon the growing solidarity of Bengali Nationalism."<sup>2</sup> Here is a neat appraisal by Sir Henry Cotton in a letter to the *Manchester Guardian* of 5th April 1904:

"The idea of the severance of the oldest and most populous and wealthy portion of Bengal and the division of its people into two arbitrary sections has given such a shock to the Bengali race, and has roused such a feeling amongst them, as was never known before. The idea of being severed from their own brethren, friends, and relations and thrown in with a backward province like Assam, which in administrative, linguistic, social and ethnological features widely differs from Bengal is so intolerable to the people of the affected tracts that public meetings have been held in almost every town and market-place in East Bengal, and the separation scheme has been universally and unanimously condemned."<sup>3</sup>

The opinion of British Labour and Liberal parties was also highly critical of Lord Curzon's attitude. John Morley, the new Secretary of State in the House of Commons, said: "Nothing was ever worse done in disregard to the feeling and opinion of the majority of the people concerned." And Ramsey MacDonald who was later to become the Prime Minister of England wrote in his book *The Awakening in India* (1910): "It was an indictable offence. Lord Curzon's personal feelings entered into it in a most reprehensible way. He devised it, as the evidence shows most conclusively, to pay off scores." Even moderates, like

Surendra Nath Banerjee and Gokhale, felt scandalised. Surendra Nath Banerjee said: "We felt that we had been insulted, humiliated and tricked. We felt that the whole of our future was at stake, and that it was a deliberate blow aimed at the growing solidarity and self-consciousness of the Bengali speaking population. . It (the partition) would be fatal to our political progress and to that close union between the Hindu and Muhammedans upon which the prospects of Indian advancement so largely depended."<sup>4</sup>

Gopal Krishna Gokhale said when he was in the presidential chair of the Indian National Congress held at Benares in 1905. "How true it is that to everything there is an end! Thus even the viceroyalty of Lord Curzon has come to a close. For a parallel to such an administration, we must, I think, go back to the times of Aurangzeb. A cruel wrong has been inflicted on our Bengali brethren. The Scheme of Partition, concocted in the dark and carried out in the face of the fiercest opposition that any Government measure has encountered during the last half a century, will always stand as a complete illustration of the worst features of the present system of bureaucratic rule.. It is difficult to speak in terms of due restraint of Lord Curzon's conduct throughout this affair."

Unfortunately, Curzon had failed to understand the truth that in human life sentiments often play a much larger role than calm intellectualism. The strength of any movement cannot be measured by only arguments and in terms of plausible logic but by the depth of emotions which sustains it. Curzon's autocratic temperament took the public views and opinions with nothing but utter ridicule and contempt. That is why he saw no force of logic behind the Anti-partition agitation, which was in his view due to unfounded propaganda by a few leaders and to the ignorance of the masses.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the partition of Bengal provided the opportunity for the development of an exalted nationalism in India. He said. "Nationalism is immortal, Nationalism cannot die, because it is no human thing, it is God who is working in Bengal." The Nationalists took full advantage of the growing spirit among the youth. There were as many as 2000 protest meetings all over the country. There was one in Baroda too. Sri Aurobindo, though he attended the meeting, did not make a speech. But he anticipated country-wide agitation. The Government tried to repress the agitation of the students, those who were coming out from the colleges and the schools. More repression followed, met by even greater defiance. It is important to quote one of Sri Aurobindo's speeches: "It is a strange idea. to think that a nation which has once risen, once has been called up by the voice of God to rise, will be stopped by mere physical repression. It has never so happened in the history of a nation, nor will it so happen in the history of India. . . Repression is nothing but the hammer of God that is beating us into shape so that we may be moulded into a mighty nation and an instrument for his work in the world. We are iron upon his



anvil and the blows are showering upon us not to destroy but to recreate  
Without suffering there can be no growth....”<sup>6</sup>

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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### FOR KRISHNA’S BLUE...

TEASE not thus, frustrate not so  
Our mortal hearts, armoured with Thy  
Impenetrable endless Time,  
Us, for whom each moment tolls  
Death’s inexorable chime  
Once Thou too, O Krishna,  
Suffered this human guise;  
Deprive us not, delay not too far  
To the earth’s craving the essence of Thy heights.  
We can but raise two feeble arms,  
We can but pray with bounded hearts.  
Grant us either the Titan’s strengths  
To wrestle Thee in fair battle,  
Or in matched glorious combat  
To accept defeat by Thee made proud.  
O Lover Supreme, the dry glades of Vrinda  
And the forlorn waves of Yamuna  
Cry for Thy blue and Radha’s gold  
To come and entrance  
With Thy flute’s marvel notes.

SHYAM KUMARI

## NEURAL DESTINY: DOES THE BRAIN HAVE A WILL OF ITS OWN?

It is an ancient and persistent question, perhaps never more adroitly framed than in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, in the fifth century B.C. The play's harrowing prophecy, delivered by the oracle at Delphi, is that the hero will someday slay his father and marry his mother. Oedipus, hearing of this destiny, determines to escape by fleeing his home in Corinth. At a crossroads, he quarrels with a traveler over the right-of-way and ends up killing the man. Soon afterward, he arrives in Thebes, where after saving the city from a murderous monster, the Sphinx, he is crowned king and marries the widowed queen Jocasta.

Two decades later, Oedipus learns the truth. His real parents are not the couple who raised him but the man he killed at the crossroads (who was King Laius of Thebes in disguise) and Queen Jocasta. For all his willful striving, Oedipus realizes that the gods, not he, have determined his lot. In horror, he gouges out his eyes.

The question posed by Sophocles' drama goes to the heart of what it is to be human: Are we autonomous individuals who have some say in what we do, or are our thoughts and behaviors determined by outside forces? Like Sophocles, the earliest philosophers leaned toward the view that the gods control man's actions, a belief that reached its culmination during the seventeenth century, in the writings of the Dutch philosopher Benedict de Spinoza. Spinoza believed that if man seemed capable of making up his mind, it was only an illusion, for all matter and thought are attributes of God and thus are determined by Him.

The opposing view was advanced in the second century B.C., by the Hebrew authors of the Old Testament. Each individual, they said, freely chooses to follow either the evil impulse (*vetzer ha-ra*) or the good (*vetzer ha-tov*). In the early fifth century A.D., Saint Augustine elaborated upon this belief, asserting that God had given man free will—but that He had also instilled in him the desire to be holy. Indeed, if man did *not* have the capacity to choose God of his own accord, many later Christian theologians observed, any punishment for sin would be cruel and pointless—an instance of God's penalizing man for wrongdoing that He himself had preordained.

Another view of free will has been espoused by such atheistic philosophers as Democritus, who, in the late fifth century B.C., suggested that the interactions of invisible particles, akin to atoms and molecules, determined all activity on Earth, including the acts of man. But it was mainly during the past hundred years that non-religious discussions of free will came to predominate. Today, some determinists, in the tradition of Democritus, hold that all our thoughts and behaviours reflect molecular activity in the brain governed not by individual volition but by the natural laws of physics and chemistry. On the other hand are those who maintain, simply, that evolutionary adaptation has given man the ability to decide his own thoughts and actions.

The debate continues, but science has introduced an important new piece of evidence. Researchers looking for the physical foundation of free choice have discerned electrical changes in the brain that indicate when we are first conscious of our decisions to act. In philosophical terms, the most striking discovery suggests that what most of us think of as free will may be physiologically impossible. The medical evidence could thus force philosophers to reconsider one of their most enduring dilemmas.

The first physiological insights into the nature of volition came indirectly, when nineteenth-century physicians discovered that the neurological control of movement—through which the will manifests itself—originates in the cerebral cortex, the wrinkled, gray outer layer of the brain. In fact, most conscious activities arise there: the capacity for speech lies in the left frontal lobes; sight is processed by the occipital lobe in the back of the head, sound is interpreted in the lateral lobes at the temple; and orders directing muscular activity are issued by the motor cortex, which stretches from ear to ear across the top of the skull.

Just how the brain coordinates action did not become clear until the 1930s, when Wilder Penfield, an American surgeon practising in Montreal, began treating victims of epilepsy. Penfield implanted electrodes in his patients' brains and watched to see which parts of their bodies were affected by mild shocks. Electrical current applied to different regions of the motor cortex resulted in movements in specific parts of the body, but patients recognized that they had not willed these actions. Then, when Penfield stimulated a region called the supplementary motor area, which lies in the chasm between the brain's left and right hemispheres, he observed more generalized twisting and turning. Later research revealed that patients with damaged supplementary motor areas often are incapable of spontaneous voluntary movements: they may listlessly respond to suggestions from others but seldom initiate movement on their own. Their wills, in short, seem dramatically curtailed, suggesting that the supplementary motor area is responsible, at least in part, for the inclination to act. Interestingly, other experiments have shown that blood flow in the supplementary motor area increases notably when subjects merely *contemplate* moving.

Next, scientists wanted to understand the exact chain of commands by which electrochemical activity, caused by the movement of ions across neuronal membranes, induces action. In 1963, two German neurologists, Hans Kornhuber and Luder Deecke, of the University of Ulm, began to examine changes in the voltage of brain signals preceding a simple physical act. They asked subjects to flex their fingers or wrists during a prescribed time, then recorded (through electrodes attached to the subjects' scalps) the corresponding electrical activity. The subjects had been taught to relax, so that extraneous electrical noise—caused by twitching feet or arching backs, for instance—would not contaminate the measurements. After many trials, the scientists were satisfied that their consistent, regular electrical readings corresponded specifically to the subjects'

hand movements.

Despite the precaution, the experiment produced results that proved difficult to interpret. The electrical meters registered spurts of neurological activity eight hundred milliseconds, or four-fifths of a second, *before* subjects moved their hands. Since the time required for a command from the motor cortex to reach and activate the muscles of the hand is just fifty milliseconds, the period of electrical activity preceding movements seemed extraordinarily long. Yet the same eight-hundred-millisecond interval was later independently discovered by Herbert Vaughan, of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, in New York. Because it was thought to represent some neuronal preparation for action, it came to be called the readiness potential.

The puzzling aspect of this research was its apparent implication that a person might somehow decide to act more than a half-second before acting. Surely, such a long gap between the decision to move and the movement itself would be perceptible. On the other hand, if the decision to act is *not* made before the onset of the readiness potential, the brain is initiating action on its own—another difficult proposition to accept, since most of us believe we think first and act later. Thus Kornhuber and Deecke's work begged the question, When exactly does the conscious intention to act occur?

In Kornhuber and Deecke's experiments, and in Vaughan's as well, subjects had not been allowed to choose freely when they flexed their hands, they had been limited to acting within certain five-second intervals. But suppose there had been no such restriction. Would it be possible to tell which came first, the readiness potential or the conscious intention to act?

In setting up such an experiment, the challenge was to pinpoint the exact moment at which the decision to move was made. To this end, I asked subjects to move a hand or a wrist at any time while watching a spot of light revolve on the face of a cathode-ray oscilloscope (something like the sweep-second hand on a clock, but faster) and to report the spot's position the instant they became aware of the decision to act. Electrodes attached to each person's scalp would tell precisely when brain wave activity changed (just as in the earlier experiments), and this moment could be compared with the moment of decision.

The results seemed even more startling than those of Kornhuber and Deecke's. Subjects did not decide to move until three hundred and fifty milliseconds *after* the readiness potential had begun. In other words, their neurons were firing a third of a second before they were even conscious of the desire to act. Hence, it appeared the brain had begun preparing for movement long before the mind had "decided" to do anything. The brain seemed to have a "mind" of its own.

Interviews with subjects, along with an examination of the data, revealed a pattern in this behavior. Despite having been instructed to make unpremeditated decisions to move, subjects reported being unable to avoid planning some

actions, though at times, they said, they had flexed their hands with true spontaneity. Yet whether the motion was planned or not, the readiness potentials were present. Thus, it seemed, even for the most spontaneous decisions, neurological preparation started long before subjects knew their own minds. This struck a blow to the traditional notion of free will, for how can our wills be free if we are only belatedly aware of their decisions?

As it turned out, the experiment's subjects offered at least a partial answer to this dilemma. Some of them reported having been conscious, during the experiment, of urges *not* to move—of desires to cancel actions they had decided to take. So the question arose, Where did these moments of reconsideration fit into the chronology of brain activity, decision making, and action? A related experiment showed, in most cases, that subjects could change their minds during the final one hundred and fifty milliseconds before they flexed their hands and that this moment of possible veto coincided with a drop in the voltage of the readiness potential. Apparently, the conscious mind could intervene, in the final stages of heightened neurological activity, either to block the already initiated movement or to let it pass.

There are two philosophical ramifications of these experiments. The human will, first of all, seems to have its roots in neurological processes of which we are utterly unaware—processes rooted in some unconscious domain. To Sigmund Freud, who argued that all human motivation arises from unconscious emotions, such a notion would make perfect sense: the lurking thoughts and feelings of the unconscious (a jealous boy's desire to strike his brother, for instance) might initiate the neuronal activity that precedes action (the punch).

This possibility is supported by the second implication of these experiments: that the brain is continuously generating possible courses of action and that free will operates merely by letting us decide which ones to execute. The workings of this selection process are not easily discerned, but they seem to be of an inhibiting nature.

We may not be aware of all the movements for which our minds may be readying us, but we can elect, decisively, *not* to flick a finger or pick up a gun. Alternatively, it may be that a conscious trigger is required before any act is executed and that any readiness potential not given the go-ahead withers on the vine. Either way, the foundation of free will seems to reside not within our unconscious capacity for generating choices but within our conscious ability, in the hundred and fifty milliseconds before taking action, to make up our minds.

BENJAMIN LIBET

Courtesy *The Sciences*, March/April 1984

# THE EVER-UNCHANGED IN THE CHANGING WORLD

## AN OBSERVATION

THE world is changing at a very rapid pace, so much so that it is difficult to recognise in the present world the world even of a century before, not to speak of the further past. This has been so mostly due to the incredible progress in science and technology. Change is the law of existence and, as such, the contributions of the electronic age are in keeping with the nature of things. But presumably a secret question throbs in most aspiring hearts—"What is the purpose behind such an unending material development; where will all of it ultimately lead us?"

The enigma of life and existence is a problem for all time. The same question from a different angle appeared once in ancient minds. They wanted to know the reason of being and becoming. The answer they received through meditation, from within and above, in a subtle spiritual and intuitive way. They also expressed their findings in poetry and symbolism to which the Vedas and the Upanishads bear testimony.

Nowadays the method of knowing is rational and deductive. Starting from without, it strives to enter within by scrutinising and generalising at every step the gains of the pursuit, to which when found false and insufficient new ones are added. The two systems are wide apart in character. But ultimately they may not be so uncompromising as they appear to be. The compromise is already there in the lives of the leading spiritual figures of our time. Outwardly they are born modern but inwardly they rank with the Rishis of yore and are destined to give a new orientation to life and society.

From an integral point of view the modern and ancient are not contradictory, rather they are complementary. Sri Aurobindo says, "There are two kinds of knowledge, that which seeks to understand the apparent phenomenon of existence externally, by an approach from outside, through the intellect—that is the lower knowledge, the knowledge of the apparent world, secondly the knowledge which seeks to know the truth of existence from within in its source and reality, by spiritual realisation. Ordinarily a sharp distinction is drawn between the two, and it is supposed that when we get the higher knowledge, the God-knowledge, then the rest, the world-knowledge becomes of no concern to us but in reality they are two sides of one seeking. All knowledge is ultimately the knowledge of God." (*The Synthesis of Yoga*)

According to Sri Aurobindo, the knowledge embodied in our ancient scriptures should in no way be disregarded. His inspired words are, "All that was found must again be sought." (*A God's Labour*) Swami Vivekananda spoke about the great German philosopher Schopenhauer who said, "In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my Life, it will be the solace of my Death." Now let us

listen a little to Swami Vivekananda. He says, "The eyes of the whole world are now turned towards the land of India for spiritual food, and India has to provide it for all the races...." (*Complete Works of Vivekananda*)

In fact the Truth in its essence is undivided and one, no matter whoever may be the exponent of it, provided it is actually lived at the time when it is expressed. The truths about God, one and undivided, are enshrined in the Vedas and the Upanishads but expressed differently by different Rishis according to their nature and temperament. In this connection Sri Aurobindo's view on Rabindranath Tagore is significant: "Tagore has been a wayfarer towards the same goal as ours in his own way—that is the main thing, the exact stage of advance and pattern of the steps are minor matters .."

Sri Aurobindo has always given more importance to the inner aspect of things than to the outer. What is achieved and established in the inner world cannot be immediately appreciated from outside. It takes time to reveal itself in full. As regards the spiritual heritage of India he said, "Break the moulds of the past but keep safe its genius and its spirit or else thou hast no future ." (*Thoughts and Aphorisms*)

This reminds us of Swami Vivekananda about whom Sri Aurobindo declared, "Vivekananda was a soul of puissance if ever there was one . We perceive his influence still working gigantically we know not well how, we know not well where, in something that has entered the soul of India and we say, 'Behold, Vivekananda still lives in the soul of his Mother and in the souls of her children....'" (*Bankim-Tilak-Dayanand*)

A little of introspection will reveal that we are all pilgrims of eternity. We are so by the very fact of our being in the cycle of creation. But we are not helpless in our journey. Our leader constantly moves with us as a pilgrim and at the same time He is also the God of our goal seated on the altar of eternity. Swami Vivekananda announces in a speech, "There is a God in this universe, it is not true that this universe is drifting and stands in need of help from you and me. God is ever present therein, He is undying and eternally active and infinitely watchful. When the whole universe sleeps He sleeps not; He is working incessantly, all the changes and manifestations of the world are His."

The statement is simple but seems to be charged with a powerful conviction born of a flaming realisation. Still at the sight of gross injustices, calamities and brutal cruelties in the world, the question crops up in many minds, "How can God, who is revered as all-good and all-just, be at the back as a support of all these horrors?" In reply Vivekananda does not say anything new. In the manner of the Upanishad he observes, "He who in good action sees that there is something evil in it, and in the midst of the evil sees that there is something good somewhere, has known the secret of work." (*The Collected Works of Vivekananda*). Presumably this will not remove doubts from the strictly rational minds. But the words should simply be accepted as pure gold tested by the touchstone of

the author's realisation and experience.

So, there may be falls and upheavals, dark tunnels and rocky hills in our way, we may not always find and feel God as our leader; in spite of all this we must have the conviction that He is there and ever busy to pave the way, to clear our path for our journey towards Him. Once that is achieved we can know at a glance the truth of the earthly plane and also of the planes beyond. The statement can be attested from the life of Sri Ramakrishna, the synthesis and embodiment of most of the main religions and sects of the world. On being asked about Yoga he said, "Kamini Kanchan (lust and greed) are the illusions, the removal of these two, from the mind precedes Yoga Paramatma (Supreme Self) is like a Magnet, Jivatma (individual self) is as if a needle. When the former attracts, then starts Yoga. But if the needle is soiled with mud, the Magnet does not attract. The mud of Kamini Kanchan has to be cleaned ."

What a simple statement but pregnant with what a profound spiritual truth! Sri Ramakrishna was not equipped with modern scholarship and learning. His grasp of knowledge was intuitive and direct like that of the ancient Rishis. His sayings were validated from his own example and those of his disciples among whom Vivekananda was most widely known. Regarding Sankara's doctrine that 'the world is an illusion' he stated, not basing anything on argumentative philosophy but on the bare and simple truth of his vision and experience: "Why should the world be an illusion? All these are talks of reasoning. When we have His Darshan we can realise that He Himself has become the world and the living beings. The Mother showed me in the Kali Temple that the Mother has become all. She showed me that all are conscious, the idol is conscious, the altar is conscious, kosha kushi (the copper vessels for worship) are conscious, the frame of the door, the marble-stone, all, all are conscious. I saw inside the room that all are dipped in a conscious fluid (Rasa), the fluid of Sachchidananda. I saw a notorious man in front of the Kali Temple, but in him also I found His force shining brilliantly."

This reminds us of Sri Aurobindo's famous Uttarpara speech. Coming out from his seclusion at Alipore he spoke of the experiences he had had in the jail. "I looked at the jail that secluded me from men and it was no longer by its high walls that I was imprisoned, no, it was Vasudeva who surrounded me. I walked under the branches of the tree in front of my cell but it was not the tree, I knew it was Vasudeva, it was Sri Krishna whom I saw standing there and holding over me His shade ... I looked at the prisoners in the jail, the thieves, the murderers, the swindlers and as I looked at them I saw Vasudeva, it was Narayana whom I found in those darkened souls and misused bodies ..."

The importance and authenticity of these visions and realisations cannot be gauged by a purely scientific, philosophic and mental method of comprehension. Unlike Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo was fully conversant with modern scientific thought, culture, philosophy and literature. His logic and capacity of



judgement were uncommon and peerless. But perhaps it was not those qualities that helped him have the above vision. Sri Ramakrishna, as was generally known, did not have any of the qualities stated above. Still there is an excellent similarity between the spiritual experiences of both of them.

We know that Ramakrishna's shortcomings in modern external knowledge were fully compensated by the master-mind of his able devotee and disciple Swami Vivekananda. Sri Aurobindo combined both the aspects in his single person. That is why he was quite at home to express the treasures of his spiritual attainment in a way most suitable for the modern mind and age. At this point perhaps it will be meaningful and interesting to go through the answer Sri Aurobindo gave to the queries of two disputing devotees:

"You can't expect me to argue about my own spiritual greatness in comparison with Krishna's. The question itself would be relevant only if there were two sectarian religions in opposition, Aurobindoism and Vaishnavism, each insisting on its own God's greatness. That is not the case. And then what Krishna must I challenge,—the Krishna of the Gita who is the transcendent Godhead, Paramatma, Parabrahma, Purushottama, the cosmic Deity, Master of the universe, Vasudeva who is all, the immanent in the heart of all creatures, or the Godhead who was incarnate at Brindavan and Dwarka and Kurukshetra and who was the guide of my Yoga and with whom I realised identity? All that is not to me something philosophical or mental but a matter of daily and hourly realisation and intimate to the stuff of my consciousness. Then from what position can I adjudicate this dispute? X thinks I am superior in greatness, you think there can be nothing greater than Krishna: each is entitled to have his own view or feeling, whether it is itself right or not. .." (*Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, 25.2 45, Centenary Vol. 26)

By now we have been able to notice the element of excellence in the lives of these eminent personalities of our time who stand as connecting links between the past and the present and point to a glorious future. We shall conclude with the touch of a typical trait of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and teaching. His untiring yogic effort and sadhana all through his life brought him in contact and communion, it is understood, with a superior Truth and Power which at the same time includes and overrules both the ancient and the modern and by its free and unhampered action can bring about a reconciliation between the two terms of existence, and can moreover help the growth of a new creation adding a fourth step to the evolutionary ladder.

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

## NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

### Mega- and Mini-Science

THE cost of the most ambitious projects of science today is in the category of *billions* of dollars. This applies especially to those subterranean particle reactors where electrons and protons are smashed into ever smaller particles. Recently, workers and engineers in Hamburg completed the construction of a giant tunnel 25 metres deep under the surface and 6.3 kms long. 450 000 cubic metres of earth were shifted and 1 billion DM had been spent after seven years of work

The purpose of the ring tube is to accelerate electrons and protons nearly to the speed of light and make them collide. Sophisticated electronic monitors will register the result of the impact. In earlier models of such tubes particles had been made to collide with their own reflected image of anti-matter. In the collision process, time runs as if backwards and allows scientists to get insight into the becoming of the universe. Some 300 different particles were discovered in course of time with a dozen elementary units which apparently could not be split any more. According to the present state of research, six quarks and six leptons constitute original matter as such.

The new machine in Hamburg will accelerate particles ten times faster than before, though with an uncertain result. Perhaps some open questions regarding the quarks will be answered, or the quarks themselves will be smashed into sub-particles so that new questions and problems come up. Certain is only the reaction of the scientists: they will ask for more money to construct yet more expensive tubes. Thus, physicists at the European Particle Research Centre CERN near Geneva wish to construct a "Large Hadron Collider" at the cost of 1.4 billion dollars, while their American colleagues plan a subterranean proton accelerator, the oval "Superconducting Super Collider" which is conceived to be 87 km long and will cost at least 11 billion dollars.

In view of more urgent problems facing humanity, some scientists are getting sceptical now regarding their attitude and approach. Although the eventual aim of the mega-projects is said to be the working out of a "Grand Unified Theory", the current impression is that of getting lost in the infinitesimally small and losing sight of the Whole. Perhaps even losing sight of the essential and of the real quantum leap which moves science forward in its great moments. The British biochemist Rupert Sheldrake—I had discussed his theory of morphic resonance in the issue of March '92—believes that in fact science with its mega-cost projects is going the wrong way. Isaac Newton did not need a super computer to come up with the idea of gravity and Einstein received his theory of relativity in a flash of intuition

Sheldrake holds that even today ground-breaking scientific research could be achieved outside expensive research labs. "There are many really important questions—questions that could change our view of reality—that can be investigated by almost anybody, on very small budgets," he contends. To prove his point, Sheldrake is doing research for a book describing low-budget experiments which could be conducted in schools and universities and which might help "to break paradigms" in the field of chemistry, biology and psychology. The title is projected to be "Eight Experiments That Could Change the World: How Big Questions Don't Need Big Science".

Whenever the book will be published, I am likely to report about it

Sources. *Der Spiegel* (6-4-92); *New Age Magazine* (February '92)

## OMAR KHAYYAM IN FRENCH

### Editor's Note

*(In 1910, when I was six years old, my father and mother took me to England for operations on my polio-affected left leg. We were on a French boat, "Ville de la Ceuta." Before making the voyage my father had spent several months with a French teacher and had come not only to speak the teacher's language but also to love it. On board ship he met a young Frenchman who, in the course of literary talks, mentioned that he had essayed to translate Fitzgerald's Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayyam a little freely yet without losing its typical turn, psychological and literary. Father was extremely interested. The Rubaiyyat or Shakespeare's Sonnets or Selections from Plato used often to be in his pocket in tiny leather-bound editions. He transcribed the translation and I remember him reciting it to his children time and again. Some parts of it are reproduced here along with the English originals. The translator's name is unfortunately missing.)*

### EPICURISME

*Réveille-toi! la nuit a dispersé ses voiles,  
Déjà Phoebus paraît sur son char nébuleux,  
Et, non content de mettre en fuite les étoiles,  
Il a pris le clocher dans un lasso de feux*

Awake! for morning in the bowl of night  
Has flung the stone that puts the stars to flight,  
And lo! the hunter of the East has caught  
The Sultan's turret in a noose of Light

*Laisse-moi m'enivrer qu'au feu de tes prunelles  
Je puisse maintenant jeter le vieux manteau  
Du repentir passé, car le Temps doit bientôt  
Dans la nuit de l'oubli s'enfuir à tire-d'aile*

Come fill the cup and in the fire of Spring  
The winter garment of Repentance fling  
The Bird of Time has but a little way  
To fly—and lo! the Bird is on the wing.

*Oh! viens avec moi sur le tapis de mousse  
Qui sépare à jamais le désert des moissons*

*Oublier l'univers, ses pleurs et ses secousses  
Et laissons les vieux fous à leurs discussions.*

With me along some strip of herbage strown  
That just divides the desert from the sown—  
Where the name of Slave and Sultan scarce is known,  
And pity Sultan Mahmud on his throne

*Sachons donc profiter d'un moment de certain,  
Puisqu'il nous appartient, avant que la poussière  
De mes os ne se mêle au Néant de la bière  
Sans coupe ni chanson, sans soir ni lendemain!*

Ah make the most of what we yet may spend,  
Before we too into the Dust descend·  
Dust unto Dust, and under Dust to lie  
Sans wine, sans song, sans singer—and sans End!

*Viens vivre dans l'oubli· laisse parler le sage,  
Pour moi, je ne connais qu'un seul point de certain  
Le jour succède au jour, tout le reste est mirage  
Comme la lune d'hier et l'aube de demain*

Oh come with old Khayyam and leave the wise  
To talk: one thing is certain that Life flies  
One thing is certain and the rest is lies;  
The flower that once has blown forever dies.

*C'est là que, sous le saule éploré qui se penche  
Et qui de ses rameaux caressait mon sein  
Je voudrais m'endormir avec toi, ma pervenche  
Le coude sous ta tête et la coupe à la main*

Here with a loaf of Bread beneath the Bough,  
A flask of Wine, a Book of Verse and thou  
Beside me singing in the Wilderness  
And Wilderness is Paradise enow

*Avec les grands penseurs j'ai disséqué la vie  
Et me suis avec eux longtemps entretenu,  
J'ai noué la science et la philosophie  
Mais suis toujours sorti par où j'étais venu!*

Myself when young did eagerly frequent  
 Doctor and Saint and heard great argument  
     About it and about but evermore  
 Came out by the same door as in I went

*Remplis-la jusqu'aux bords et laisse ce breuvage  
 Dissiper à jamais les regrets du passé,  
     Et l'espoir de demain—Verse. Demain? Qui sait?  
 Je puis n'être que poudre au fond d'un sarcophage.*

Ah my Beloved, fill the cup that clears  
 Today of past regrets and future fears.  
     Tomorrow? Why, tomorrow I may be  
 Myself with yesterday's seven thousand years

*Oh! remplis de son vin, la coupe de la vie  
 Car le Temps se dérobe, et se refuse à nous,  
     L'aurore est loin encore et la nuit s'est enfuie,  
 Pourquoi donc y penser si ce moment est doux?*

Ah fill the cup—what boots it to repeat  
 How time is slipping underneath our feet—  
     Unborn tomorrow and dead yesterday,  
 Why fret about them if today be sweet?

*Oh souffle du Destin docile, tourniquet  
 Ce bas monde n'est qu'un mime d'ombres, ma belle,  
     Où chacun à son tour entre et puis disparaît  
 La Vie en est la toile et Phoebus la chandelle.*

For in and out, above, about, below  
 'Tis nothing but a Magic Shadow show  
     Played in a Box whose candle is the Sun  
 Round which we phantom Figures come and go.

*Ce n'est qu'un grand damier fait de jours et de nuits  
 Sur lequel le Destin nous avance, nous mate,  
     Puis nous mène à la mort et tous ses coups finis  
 Dans le coffret de bois, nous allonge à la hâte.*

'Tis all a Chequer-board of Nights and Days  
 Where Destiny with men for Pieces plays,

Hither and thither moves and mates and slays  
 And one by one back in the Closet lays.

*Le doigt divin marqua jadis chaque feuillet  
 De bronze dans le livre où chaque heure est un signe  
 Ainsi que buriné sous un coup de maillet  
 Tous nos pleurs ne sauraient en changer une ligne.*

The Moving Finger writes and, having writ,  
 Moves on; nor all thy Piety nor Wit  
 Shall lure it back to cancel half a line  
 Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.

*Et cet anneau azur, immense firmament  
 Sous lequel nous courons à la nuit éternelle,  
 Ne levons pas vers lui nos bras en l'implorant  
 Car il peut moins que nous pour celui qui l'appelle.*

And that inverted Bowl we call the sky  
 Whereunder crawling cooped we live and die,  
 Lift not thy hands to it for help—for it  
 Rolls impotently on as thou and I.

## SUDDEN TALES THE FOLKS TOLD

*(Continued from the issue of June 1992)*

### 19. Experience is the Teacher of Fools

A TRAVELLER on horseback passing through a poor village accidentally dropped one of his money bags containing a hundred gold coins in the main street, before he took shelter in an inn.

A poor boy who happened to see the bag took it and untied its mouth. Like the bag's, his mouth too went agape. He had never in his life-time seen so many gold coins in one place. He was sure that the bag fell off a traveller, who must be in search of it. Hence he took it carefully and handed it over to the village chief.

The village chief smiled at the boy and patted him, in appreciation of his honesty. He then with the help of his village-criers had the news announced across the village.

The traveller who had lost his money bag was happy to listen to a tom-tom beater: "A poor boy has found a bag containing a hundred coins of gold. Whoever lost it can get it back from the village chief after giving correct particulars about the bag."

The traveller approached the village chief. Giving exact particulars about the bag, he got it back. "Let me count before I leave the place," said he.

"Do as you please," responded the chief.

The traveller while counting said to himself: "Now that I have got back my coins, why should not I play a trick on these fellows?" Hence he said to the chief thus: "Sir! Here are only a hundred coins. What about the rest? I had two hundred in this bag. Please find out from the boy what he has done with the other hundred."

The village chief was no fool to be tricked thus. It took little time for him to find that the traveller was telling a blatant lie. He was sure that the bag had space enough to hold only half-a-dozen coins more.

So under the pretext of counting the coins once again, the chief got the bag back from the traveller. "Sir! As you can see, this bag has not space enough to hold two hundred gold coins. Hence this bag is not certainly yours. It will go back to the boy who has picked it up from the street."

Seconds later he continued: "But, Sir! We'll make all efforts to trace your lost bag. As soon as we succeed in our attempt we will definitely call on you." With a wink he added: "Till then, good-bye."

The traveller had no go but to grin and bear the judgement.

In the privacy of his room, he wept bitter tears over his lost gold coins.

\*



## 20. My Rabbit is a Three-Legged Creature

Long, long ago there lived a teacher. His name was Guru Sivayogi. He had a few obedient and loyal disciples. They lived with the guru sharing his meal and shelter.

One day the guru called Veeran, the most courageous of all his disciples, and told him, "Go to the forest and fetch me a fat rabbit. Cook its flesh and roast its legs."

The disciple obeyed the guru's order. He went into the forest and trapped a fat rabbit. He made a tasty mince of its flesh and roasted its legs. Tempted by the smell of his own cooking, he unhesitatingly ate one leg and took the other three to his guru.

The guru while eating found that one leg was missing. He called Veeran for an explanation. "My master!" replied Veeran, "The rabbit I trapped today had only three legs."

Guru Sivayogi knew that it was an unlikely excuse. So he repeatedly asked him. But Veeran gave the same reply. Wishing to get the truth out of him, the guru thought of a plan to trap him.

As the guru and his disciples were in the habit of smearing holy ash on their foreheads, the former gave some to Veeran. It was a magical ash. Whoever smeared it on his forehead became invisible.

Veeran unaware of its magic power smeared the holy ash and became invisible. His joy knew no bounds. Since he loved food more than anything else in the world, he tried his luck in the royal kitchen. He began to steal the food of the king and then made a practice of it.

The chief cook complained to the king, who in turn posted a number of guards to catch the thief. But the food continued to disappear. The king made it known to the public that the one who would catch the thief would get a reward of a hundred gold coins.

Guru Sivayogi knew who the culprit was. He went to the king and said: "Your majesty! It is easy to catch the thief. All that you have to do is to make the royal kitchen very, very sultry and post the guards in every nook and corner of it."

The next day all the windows and doors except the main door were shut airtight. There was not even enough air inside to breathe.

Veeran, as usual, entered the kitchen. He started tasting one dish after another. The kitchen became so sultry that the invisible man began to sweat. The sweat that gushed from his forehead washed the magic holy ash away. He became visible. Before he could make his escape, the vigilant guards caught him. The king threw him in prison and ordered him to be hanged on the next day.

The guru heard of the king's verdict. He did not want to lose his bold disciple. He went to the prison and told Veeran: "Tomorrow you are going to be

hanged. If you tell me the truth about the legs of the rabbit, I'll have you set free."

But Veeran was very stubborn. "The rabbit I trapped had only three legs," he said. The guru appreciated his intrepidity. He requested the king to forgive his disciple. The king heard the whole story. He laughed to his heart's content and magnanimously pardoned the culprit.

\*

## 21. The Illiterate Critic

"O, what a lovely piece of work!"

"This is a rare specimen of craftsmanship "

"What a marvellous painting!"

People went on praising a picture of two oxen fighting, painted by a very famous artist. Proud of his work, the artist mounted his masterpiece on costly silk hung from gold rods. He safeguarded it in a cedar box. He showed it to none but his intimate friends who always praised his work.

Once in ten days the artist took his much-loved painting out of the cedar box, unrolled it and hung it in the sun as a precaution against silverfish and other pests.

One day when a cowherd entered the artist's house to milk the cows he saw the painting of two oxen fighting, hanging on a pole exposed to the sun. He stood in front of the picture and smiled broadly.

The artist who noticed the cowherd smiling asked him: "Do you like it? Aren't the oxen life-like?"

The cowherd, who was only a boy, replied, "Sure, Sir! They look like real oxen. But the fight is wrongly depicted." He continued his smile.

The artist's eyes turned red. "You illiterate fellow!" he yelled at the boy. "What do you know about painting? And whom do you take me for? I am a master in painting and there is none in this world who can excel me in my craft. That picture you are looking at has been praised by great men. Yet you find fault in my work of art. How dare you?"

"Cool down, Sir!" said the boy. "I have no iota of doubt that you are a great painter. But allow me to point out the flaw in that painting you have displayed. When oxen fight and butt with their horns, they keep their tails tucked between their rumps. But in your picture they are flicking their tails about. I have seen oxen fight, ever since I was a babe. But no ox fought like this before. I doubt only the authenticity of the fight. I may be an illiterate, but you should remember that a flaw is a flaw."

The great painter bent down his head for having scolded the illiterate cowherd for his sincere criticism.

\*

## 22. Only One

A rich merchant brought home two mangoes. He gave them to his cook and said, "I have invited a friend of mine for tea. Peel off the skins and cut the fruit into slices. When my friend arrives here, serve us with two cups of tea and mango slices."

The cook took the mangoes to the kitchen, peeled off the skins and sliced the fruit. The fruit was so ripe and sweet-smelling that he was unable to resist the temptation. He tasted a slice and found it very good. He tasted a second slice; then a third and a fourth. He went on eating without knowing what he was doing. When there was nothing left to eat, he became aware of his blunder. He was afraid of his master and didn't know what to do next.

When he was seriously thinking of the next step, his master called him and asked: "Did you slice the fruit? My friend may be here any minute."

"No, Sir! I am a bit busy in cooking food. To cut the fruit, I have to sharpen the knife. It may take some time. As soon as I finish cooking, I'll take up that work."

"Well then! Give me the knife. I'll sharpen it for you," so saying the master took the knife to the garden. There he started sharpening it with a grindstone.

The cook was in a fix. He heard someone knocking on the door. He went to answer the knock. To his horror, he saw his master's friend standing there.

A sudden idea flashed into the cook's mind. He told the guest in a very friendly tone: "Sir! Please listen to me if you want to save yourself. I think my master is angry with you. He is sharpening a knife to cut off both your ears."

"What? To cut off my ears!" exclaimed the guest. "What have I done to him to deserve such treatment? He must be harbouring some grudge against me. Oh! Is it for this purpose he invited me?"

"I think so, Sir. From the morning he has been in an unusually angry mood. I heard him grumble: 'Let him come. I'll lop off his ears'. Why don't you see for yourself?" The cook opened the kitchen window and the guest looked out and saw his friend sharpening a knife.

Terrified, the guest took to his heels.

Immediately the cook ran to the garden and cried to his master in haste. "Master! Master! Your friend is running off with the two mangoes. I am unable to stop him. Catch him."

The master holding his knife rushed to the street and saw his friend running. He started chasing him, all the time shouting, "Give me one.. at least one. Give me one ..only one."

The friend heard the words. He thought that his friend was asking for one of his ears. He started running faster than before without even turning to look back.

Unable to chase him further, the bulky master came back home.

### 23. The Affectionate Mother

A long time ago when all the journeys were undertaken on foot, a young villager desired to visit all the places in the South. When he told his mother about his plan, she felt extremely sad. She was afraid of his going alone, for most of the places had to be reached by passing through thick dark forests. Moreover, as an affectionate mother, she did not want her son to be away from her for months together. So she refused permission. But her son was adamant. She told him about the dangers of crossing the forests. But he had once for all determined to wander.

The mother had no alternative but to allow her son to go.

“But you should promise me one thing, my son,” requested the mother. “On your forward journey, you should by all means take rest or sleep only under the tamarind trees; on your homeward journey only under the margosa trees.”

The son promised his mother and started his journey.

A couple of weeks passed. The mother became anxious. Two days later, there was a knock on the door.

The mother was not in the least surprised to see her son return so soon. She was happy for her trick had worked very well.

“What happened, my son? Why are you back so soon?” she asked feigning ignorance.

“Oh, I should have taken your advice, my mother, and kept quiet at home minding the cows and the fields. But the curiosity to see places made me undertake this arduous journey. As promised, I took rest under the tamarind trees. But I fell seriously ill within a week. I was unable to continue the journey. I had none to help me. So I decided to make my way back home.”

His mother listened to him with rapt attention, all the time smiling.

“And on my homeward journey, as instructed by you, I took rest under the margosa trees. I regained my lost strength day after day. And I am here before you. But I do not know how I fell ill and how I recovered. It still remains a mystery to me.” So saying the son went to the backyard to look after his cows.

The mother laughed behind his back and spoke to herself thus: “My son! Taking rest under the tamarind trees and breathing the hot air it fans is bad for the health. It increases the temperature in our body and so we fall ill. But breathing the cool air fanned by the margosa leaves lessens the temperature in our body and restores health. That was how you fell ill on the way and how you came back home recovering from illness.”

*(More Tales to follow)*

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**Miracles still happen in Brindavan** by *Kripavikshu Anil Mohan*; H K. Publishers and Distributors, Delhi, 1991, Pages vi + 236; Rs 230.

THE SWAMIJI of Bharat Sevashram in Brindavan asked the 20-year-old Anil Mohan in 1954, "Well, boy, do you call that 'foreign lady' your Mother?" Anil felt shocked. He had never seen the Mother of the Ashram with his own eyes, yet he perceived that he had seen her so many times in so many different forms. Anil answered the Swamiji, "We make all kinds of deities out of clay and stone and worship them as 'Mother', don't we? And if we can worship statues of clay and stone, then where is the wrong, Swamiji, in calling a woman of flesh and blood 'Mother', though she may be a foreign lady?" It is this infallibility of his faith and conviction that has made Kripavikshu Anil Mohan what he is today. He again proclaims: "My Gurudev Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were always in my heart, my constant communion with them in yoga was so firm that distance did not matter at all." It is this invincibility of his initiation into Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga that brought him to Pondicherry about 40 years ago and made him surrender totally and willingly to the Gurudev and the Mother.

The book is a long confessional statement of a pilgrim's progress. The pilgrim is none other than the author himself. Anil Mohan lost his father and later, while studying in college at Calcutta, his mother too, his whole support in this world. He went to complete her last rites to Gaya and, having no mind to go back home, resolved to go to Pondicherry. Since he learnt that the Ashram would not accept new people for the next few years, he was left with no other choice than going to Sri Krishna's land, Brindavan. Brindavan, the Land of Love, is a kshetra and, "sanctified by the touch of the holy, continues to exercise a strong fascination, even a pull, over large sections of humanity" since "manifestations of the Divine have taken place there." Sri M.P. Pandit in his Foreword says, "Brindavan on earth is surely the physical focus of the original on a celestial plane." No wonder, Anil chose Brindavan for a temporary sojourn.

Inexperienced and gullible as he was, Anil was cheated of his money by a panda (guide) in Gaya. From Prayag onwards he rode the train without a ticket and in Agra he was caught and put in Mathura's jail for a month's imprisonment. He had already been initiated into Sri Aurobindo's yoga and accepted Him as his Guru. He had had a vision on the last day in Mathura's jail in which he was commanded to go to his Guru's Ashram, Pondicherry. After release, he footed the distance from Mathura to Brindavan. He had with him two and a half rupees given to him by the jail authorities. On arrival in Brindavan, he exclaimed, "In each and every grain of sand I could feel the very touch of the divine feet of Radha and Krishna!" (p 33)

The author has a triple vision—the physical, the spiritual and also the

poetic. Being a poet, his descriptive prose often transforms into elevated poetic ebullience. The sketches (probably by himself) and photos add embellishments to the poetic spirit and bring before our eyes the beautiful landscape of Brindavan itself. As an illustrative example, the experience of his first bath in the Yamuna evokes a romantic painting in words on a large canvas, lavishly and sensuously splashed with a rainbow of colourful expressions. Even ordinary physical objects take on a wonderful appearance. "The beauty of eternal Brindavan appeared before his eyes. All was delight to his eyes" (p 37).

Anil was accosted by one Kashiram, a Bengalee from Bihar. Kashiram used to run away from his family to Brindavan whenever he felt so and had been well versed in its topography and details. He had befriended one Bepin Brajabasi there who would shelter Kashiram until the latter's family sent him a money order on instruction from him. When Anil saw women, each carrying two or three pots on her head one on top of the other, he visualized Krishna's mother Yashoda carrying the pots that way. Anil shared Kashiram's accommodation which was really a stable. Biting cold outside and burning hunger inside characterised his first night in Brindavan. However, one is sure of a meal there, for there are a lot of *chhatras*. But Anil was yet to feel 'at home'.

After Kashiram left, he stumbled into Bharat Sevashram for a shelter. The head Swamiji of the Ashram and his disciple, another Swamiji from Gaya, verified his bio-data and at last accommodated him. When Anil was not able to understand "inlands", the Swamiji doubted his credentials as a former Calcutta University student. This necessitated another test by the Swamiji but Anil passed with flying colours. Though he felt the essential quality of Brindavan—the emotion of love and delight—he often heaved a sigh, looking in the direction of too distant Pondicherry. He left Bharat Sevashram after 15 days despite the Swamijis' love and care.

In Brindavan, even begging has a special name, *madhukari* which means 'the collection of honey.' And here honey is understood to represent the grace of Radha and Krishna. Chapter 5 is a kind of re-enactment in words of the love-story of Radha and Krishna. Along with the reporting writer, the reader feels the glow of the divine light within lit by the devotional songs. The young Anil came into contact with another memorable character, a wandering ascetic minstrel, Nitai Bauri, a refugee from East Bengal in the wake of the Partition violence. Nitai Bauri's young wife was abducted by some ruffians on the way and his elderly mother died from the shock of it. The conversation of Anil with him brings before our eyes the Partition horror. Bauri got initiated into *bhek*, the term used for initiation into Vaishnavism. Anil resisted this as he had already been initiated into Sri Aurobindo's Life Divine. His stay at the Mirzapur Dharmashala introduced to him Sharmaji, its manager, a typical character through whom Anil exposes the inherent weakness of the physical mind. Anil was employed as a domestic help in the residence of Sharmaji's third wife,

Sumitaji. There was a difference of at least 40 years between her age and Sharmaji's. Sumitaji unlocked her heart to Anil and gave expression to her agony of being the wife of an elderly and sickly husband who had already had two heart-attacks. She married the old man in order to repay her drunkard-father's debts to Sharmaji. However, she identified Sharmaji with SRI Krishna. Anil called her 'Brajangana', one of the Gopis of the Lord. Ironically, she lost her husband very soon and, in the author's opinion, she was not a widow but a living 'Brajangana' in the real sense.

Anil became friendly with one Madhu Sorkal who introduced him to 'Sri Gauranga Dramatic Club'. Anil was terribly in need of some job to subsist on. So he was forced to play the character of a fat and gluttonous Brahmin in the play called *Bhakta Haridas*. His empty stomach was heavily padded to portray the greedy man's ludicrous pot-belly, though inside he was starving (p 170) This combination of humour and pathos in his narrative skill speaks of his unsophisticated being. As Sri M.P. Pandit says, "He is convincing when he speaks of his experience." With his real story-telling skill, he "gives a most entertaining and informative picture of life in Brindavan" (A.M. Stuttle).

Anil later entered the household of Mr. Goswami, the servitor of the Damodar Temple and one of the patrons of the Dramatic Club. Then he had a sojourn in Rabhupad Kutir—a Vaishnava monastery. The young wives of the Brajabasis were astoundingly beautiful but their beauty never disturbed the author's mind. Since his mind lay somewhere else, Anil felt that he could not become a monk or Vaishnavite himself. He decided to leave Brindavan and head straight for Pondicherry. There was no one he felt closer to than Sri Aurobindo. He felt it imperative to reach Pondicherry, his spiritual master's place at any cost—to travel even without a ticket. On the last day in Brindavan, all his experience there had become a thing of the past. In mysterious circumstances he lost his old clothes while bathing and had to spend almost all his savings on buying new clothes.

He was now left with two or three rupees. He had to go out of Brindavan as he came into it in terms of money, but not without experiencing the miracles of Brindavan. He went straight to Banka Beharaji's temple and purchased some milk sweets with the remaining money and offered them in worship to the deity. Unusually, the priest kept only a very little *prasad* and returned most of the sweets. When he was looking for someone to accept the *prasad*, he was confronted by a most remarkable sight. An exquisitely beautiful young female Vaishnava came to him with both hands outstretched. He filled her two hands with the sweets. Even after filling her hands, quite a quantity still remained in the packet. He prayed to Radharani. The same young Vaishnava lady again appeared and got the rest of it. Radharani did not let Anil's desire be unfulfilled. It was Radharani herself who appeared to him in the guise of that Vaishnava woman. A miracle indeed! Later on the way to the Yamuna for a last dip, Anil

met a man, his physique and even his complexion were typically those of Sri Krishna. He had a nice bamboo flute in his hand. He whispered a mantra in Anil's ear much against the latter's resistance. Anil Mohan had already surrendered to Sri Aurobindo, his own Krishna. Such miracles still happen in Brindavan. Even the chapterisation of the book into 12 neat chapters symbolically suggests that the miracles take place through all the 12 months of a year.

D GNANASEKARAN



## *Students' Section*

### THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Seventy-first Seminar

23 February 1992

*(Continued from the issue of June 1992)*

“HOW TO PREPARE OURSELVES TO BECOME THE TRUE  
INSTRUMENTS OF THE MOTHER’S GREAT WORK  
FOR EARTH AND HUMANITY?”

**Speech by Nandini Guthi**

THE subject of our seminar consists of two related parts. I shall deal with them successively

First: What is the Great Work of The Mother for earth and humanity?

Before I attempt to explain it, I must mention that The Mother did not begin Her Great Work only in Her present life, nor did She carry it on by Herself alone. She commenced it from the beginning of earth’s evolutionary history and it was always carried on jointly with Sri Aurobindo. Please note that this is not my conjecture. Both She and Sri Aurobindo have themselves stated it a number of times. I will read here only a few brief statements in which They have said this.

About Herself, The Mother has said: “Since the beginning of the earth, wherever and whenever there was the possibility of manifesting a ray of Consciousness, I was there.”<sup>1</sup> And to a sadhak who asked Her, “May I know how many centuries past you have been on earth?”, She replied: “I have never left the earth since its formation.”<sup>2</sup>

About Sri Aurobindo also She has said: “Since the beginning of earth history, Sri Aurobindo has always presided over the great earthly transformations, under one form or another, one name or another”<sup>3</sup> Sri Aurobindo Himself said the same thing to a sadhak who asked him what He and The Mother were doing during their previous lives. His brief answer was: “Carrying on the evolution”<sup>4</sup> When further asked to elucidate this answer, he said. “That would

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Works of The Mother* (Cent Ed), Vol 13, p 37

<sup>2</sup> *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, 34th Number, p VIII

<sup>3</sup> *Collected Works of The Mother* (Cent Ed), Vol 13, p 10

<sup>4</sup> *On Himself* (Cent Ed, Vol 26), p 445

mean writing the whole of human history”<sup>5</sup>

It will be clear from these few brief statements of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo about Their work that it is related to the earth’s evolutionary history and consists in pressing on that evolution starting from inconscient Matter through its intermediate stages of Life and Mind and Supermind till it reaches its culmination in the superconscient Spirit

But evolution on earth from Matter to Spirit is usually a very slow and tardy process working upwards through long millenniums, though at each forward stage it gradually gets accelerated. This is because the Spirit which is always the motive-force of the evolutionary nîsus remains veiled and allows its instrumental powers of Nature to operate on the surface. But in this slow and tardy process there arrive certain crucial periods of transition when the Spirit directly intervenes to carry the evolutionary movement to its next higher stage. This intervention takes the form of a special incarnation of the Supreme Spirit or the Divine suited to the need of each critical period. During such a period the incarnate Divine himself becomes active and, assuming effective control of the evolutionary movement, lifts it up to its next higher level. Such periods, according to Sri Aurobindo, are the hours of God

There have been several such hours of God in the past history of terrestrial evolution marked by the advent of a series of Divine Incarnations. At the present moment the evolution has arrived at one more crucial stage when it is poised to rise from the mental to the supramental level. So we can call it one more hour of God. And during this period the Divine has incarnated as Sri Aurobindo to manifest the supermind on earth, jointly with The Mother.

Now I shall try to explain how we should prepare ourselves to become the true instruments of The Mother in Her Great Work, which forms the second part of the subject of this Seminar. This preparation on our part is essential because though the Divine is All-Powerful yet at the human stage of evolution a certain preparation on the part of the human race to make itself fit for the next supramental stage is needed. This preparation, at least in a small section of humanity, is the necessary condition for the successful accomplishment of the supramental manifestation on earth.

How are we to prepare ourselves for this momentous change? Basically the preparation consists in carrying out the whole process of total transformation by practising Sri Aurobindo’s integral yoga.

But then it may be asked: what are the chief requirements of practising this integral yoga? What are the main conditions of preparation for the supramental change?

This, indeed, is the most important part of the topic of our Seminar. But I do not wish to elaborate on it in my own words. I have found a letter of Sri Aurobindo in which He has laid down succinctly the main conditions of

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*

preparation for the supramental change which together constitute the whole endeavour of supramental transformation I shall read out this letter to you here.

### MAIN CONDITIONS OF PREPARATION FOR THE SUPRAMENTAL CHANGE

“Get the psychic being in front and keep it there, putting its power on the mind, vital and physical, so that it shall communicate to them its force of single-minded aspiration, trust, faith, surrender, direct and immediate detection of whatever is wrong in the nature and turned towards ego and error, away from Light and Truth.

“Eliminate egoism in all its forms, eliminate it from every movement of your consciousness

“Develop the cosmic consciousness—let the ego-centric outlook disappear in wideness, impersonality, the sense of the Cosmic Divine, the perception of universal forces, the realisation and understanding of the cosmic manifestation, the play

“Find in place of ego the true being—a portion of the Divine, issued from the World-Mother and an instrument of the manifestation This sense of being a portion of the Divine and an instrument should be free from all pride, sense or claim of ego or assertion of superiority, demand or desire For if these elements are there, then it is not the true thing

“Most in doing yoga live in the mind, vital, physical, lit up occasionally or to some extent by the higher mind and by the illumined mind, but to prepare for the supramental change it is necessary (as soon as, personally, the time has come) to open up to the Intuition and the overmind, so that these may make the whole being and the whole nature ready for the supramental change Allow the consciousness quietly to develop and widen and the knowledge of these things will progressively come.

“Calm, discrimination, detachment (but not indifference) are all very important, for their opposites impede very much the transforming action Intensity of aspiration should be there, but it must go along with these No hurry, no inertia, neither rajasic over-eagerness nor tamasic discouragement—a steady and persistent but quiet call and working No snatching or clutching at realisation, but allowing realisation to come from within and above and observing accurately its field, its nature, its limits.

“Let the power of The Mother work in you, but be careful to avoid any mixture or substitution, in its place, of either a magnified ego-working or a force of Ignorance presenting itself as Truth Aspire especially for the elimination of all obscurity and unconsciousness in the nature.

“These are the main conditions of preparation for the supramental change, but none of them is easy, and they must be complete before the nature can be

said to be ready. If the true attitude (psychic, unegoistic, open only to the Divine Force) can be established, then the process can go on much more quickly. To take and keep the true attitude, to further the change in oneself, is the help that can be given, the one thing asked to assist the general change.”<sup>6</sup>

March 5, 1932

SRI AUROBINDO

<sup>6</sup> *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed., Vol 23), pp 554-55