

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

JANUARY 1993

PRICE: Rs. 6.00

REGARDING SUBSCRIPTION

In view of the continuing rise in costs it is necessary to increase our subscription rates. Now the annual inland subscription from next January will be Rs. 80 instead of Rs. 60 and the inland life-membership will come to Rs. 1120 in place of the former Rs. 840. Foreign subscription by Sea Mail will be \$18 or £12 in place of \$15 or £10 and that for Life Membership will be \$252 or £168 in place of \$224 or £140. Subscriptions by Air Mail remain unchanged. Inland price of single copy increases from Rs. 6 to Rs. 8. We appeal to our friends to co-operate with us as they have done all these years.

NEW RATES

INLAND

Annual Rs. 80.00

Life Membership Rs. 1120.00

OVERSEAS

Sea Mail

Annual \$18.00 or £12.00

Life Membership \$252.00 or £168.00

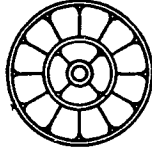
Air Mail

Annual \$36.00 for American & Pacific countries

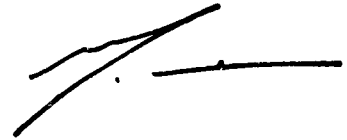
£26.00 for all other countries

Life Membership \$504.00 for American & Pacific countries

£364.00 for all other countries



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.



All Rights Reserved No matter appearing in this journal or part thereof may be reproduced or translated without written permission from the publishers except for short extracts as quotations
All correspondence to be addressed to
MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002, India
Editor's Phone 24782
Publishers Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

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

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLVI

No. 1

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

<i>The Mother</i>		
A TALK TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 14 DECEMBER 1955	...	5
<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>		
"THE MAN OF SORROWS" AND THE DIVINE FORCE FROM NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE	...	10
<i>Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)</i>		
LIFE—POETRY—YOGA SOME PERSONAL LETTERS	...	14
<i>Huta</i>		
THE STORY OF A SOUL	...	22
<i>Arvind Habbu</i>		
VOICELESS (Poem)	...	31
<i>Damodar Reddy</i>		
THE CHILD'S FACE (Poem)	...	32
<i>Nirodbaran</i>		
MATRIMANDIR: AN IMPRESSIONISTIC PICTURE	...	33
<i>Satadal</i>		
ON VAN GOGH (Poem)	...	38
<i>Nirodbaran</i>		
SOME EPISODES FROM THE LIFE OF "AN EXTRAORDINARY GIRL"	...	39
<i>Vikas Dhandhanra</i>		
QUANTUM AND THE ENORMOUS CHANGE — PART II	...	41
<i>Nilima Das</i>		
SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA	...	46
<i>Wilfried</i>		
A DEBATE ON THE FUTURE OF SANSKRIT	...	48
<i>Saumitra (Dr. Werner Haubrich)</i>		
EXTRACTS FROM THE INDIAN DIARY	...	52

CONTENTS

<i>Chunilal Chowdhury</i> UNFORGETTABLE	... 56
<i>P. Raja</i> SUDDEN TALES THE FOLKS TOLD	.. 60
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE	
<i>Ravindra Khanna</i> <i>Review of THE VEDIC EPIPHANY, VOLUME ONE: THE VEDIC VISION</i> <i>by V. MADHUSUDAN REDDY</i>	... 66
<i>Nilima Das</i> <i>Review of A NEW EDUCATION FOR A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS (COMPILATION)</i>	... 70

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 14 DECEMBER 1955

Mother reads from *The Synthesis of Yoga*, "Self-Consecration"

Sweet Mother, I haven't understood this paragraph very well

WHICH paragraph?

"The powers of this world and their actual activities, it is felt, either do not belong to God at all or are for some obscure and puzzling cause, Maya or another, a dark contradiction of the divine Truth "

It is a certain attitude which produces this. He says it earlier, doesn't he? He explains it. There is an attitude in which all material things appear to be not only not the expression of the Divine but incapable of becoming that and essentially opposed to the spiritual life. And so there is only one solution—it was that of the old Yogas, you know—the total rejection of life as not being able to participate in the spiritual life at all, the rejection of material life. This is what he explains. He says that with this attitude, that's how one looks at life. He does not say that it is like that, he says that one looks at it, considers it like that, that it is the attitude of those who have completely separated life from the spirit, and who say that life is an illusion, a falsification, and that it is incapable of expressing the Divine.

That's all?

Sweet Mother, " we can ..enrich our realisation with the booty torn from the powers that oppose us."

What is this booty?

All the adverse forces at work in the world.

The world as it is today is in its greater part under the influence of the adverse forces. We call them adverse because they do not want the divine life; they oppose the divine life. They want things to remain as they are, because it is their field and their power in the world. They know very well that they will lose all power and all influence the moment the Divine manifests. So they are fighting openly and completely against the Divine, and we have to tear away from them bit by bit, little by little, all the things they have conquered in the outer life. And so when it is torn away from them, it is so much gained.

On the other hand, if, as was done formerly, we try what is called clearing the ground, that is, if we let go all the things we consider as not capable of being

transformed, then it is so much lost for the divine realisation

All the realisations of Nature in the outer life, all that it has created—for example upon earth all this vegetable and animal kingdom, you see, and this ordinary human world which it has created—if we give up all this as an illusion incapable of expressing the Divine, then this is so much left in the hands of the adverse forces which try to keep it, no doubt, for their own ends. Whereas if we consider that all this may be at present deformed but that in its essence and origin not only does it belong to the Divine but is the Divine Himself, then we can work consciously, deliberately at the transformation and wrest all these things from the hostile influence which now governs them.

That's all? Still ?

Sweet Mother, what is our universal being?

Our universal being? What is it? I don't understand your question very well.

What is it? "For our entire nature and its environment, all our personal and all our universal self, are full of habits and of influences that are opposed to our spiritual rebirth."

Our universal self is our relation with all others and all the movements of Nature.

And I have often told you, haven't I?, that the first state of your being is a state of an almost total mixture with all things from outside, and that there is almost no individualisation, that is, specialisation which makes you a different being. You are moved—a kind of form which is your physical being is moved—by all the common universal forces, vital forces or mental forces, which go through your form and put it in motion.

So that is the universal being.

And all that you have wrested from this general semi-consciousness, and have crystallised into a more or less independent being, conscious of itself and having its own qualities, all this is your individual being. And this individual being is full of all the movements of obscurity, unconsciousness, and of the limitations of ordinary life, and that's . . . and that's what you must gradually open to the divine influence and bring to the consciousness and understanding of things. That's what Sri Aurobindo says.

In fact, the first victory is to create an individuality. And then later, the second victory is to give this individuality to the Divine. And the third victory is that the Divine changes your individuality into a divine being.

There are three stages: the first is to become an individual, the second is to consecrate the individual, that he may surrender entirely to the Divine and be identified with Him, and the third is that the Divine takes possession of this individual and changes him into a being in His own image, that is, he too becomes divine.

Generally, all the yogas stopped at the second. When one had succeeded in surrendering the individual and giving him without reserve to the Divine to be identified with Him, one considered that his work was finished, that all was accomplished.

But we begin there, and we say, "No, this is only a beginning. We want this Divine with whom we are identified to enter our individuality and make it into a divine personality acting in a divine world. And this is what we call transformation. But the other precedes it, must precede it. If that is not done, there is no possibility of doing the third. One can't go from the first to the third; one must pass through the second.

Mother, the third depends entirely on the Divine, whether He wills to take possession or not

In fact everything depends entirely on the Divine. It is only the consciousness you have of it which is different. So in the third stage, obviously, one becomes conscious that it is the Divine who does everything; so it depends entirely on the Divine.

When you say this, the part of your consciousness which is still convinced of its separation and its own existence is looking at the other and saying, "Ah, good! Now I shall no longer have to do anything." But if it no longer exists, if it becomes conscious that it is the Divine, then it can't have this impression. It does the work, continues to do it, but with the true consciousness, instead of having the distorted consciousness

(Silence)

That's all?

Sweet Mother, how can one feel the divine Presence constantly?

Why not?

But how can one do it?

But I am asking why one should not feel it. Instead of asking the question how to feel it, I ask the question: "What do you do that you don't feel it?" There is no reason not to feel the divine Presence. Once you have felt it, even once, you should be capable of feeling it always, for it is there. It is a fact. It is only our ignorance which makes us unaware of it. But if we become conscious, why should we not always be conscious? Why forget something one has learnt? When one has had the experience, why forget it? It is simply a bad habit, that's all.

You see, there is something which is a fact, that's to say, it *is*. But we are unaware of it and do not know it. But after we become conscious and know it, why should we still forget it? Does it make sense? It's quite simply because we are not convinced that once one has met the Divine one can't forget Him any more. We are, on the contrary, full of stupid ideas which say, "Oh! Yes, it's very well once like that, but the rest of the time it will be as usual." So there is no reason why it may not begin again.

But if we know that... we did not know something, we were ignorant, then the moment we have the knowledge. I am sincerely asking how one can manage to forget. One might not know something, that is a fact, there are countless things one doesn't know. But the moment one knows them, the minute one has the experience, how can one manage to forget? Within yourself you have the divine Presence, you know nothing about it—for all kinds of reasons, but still the chief reason is that you are in a state of ignorance. Yet suddenly, by a clicking of circumstances, you become conscious of this divine Presence, that is, you are before a fact—it is not imagination, it is a fact, it's something which exists. Then how do you manage to forget it once you have known it?

But still this state of ignorance is in us

Ah! and why? Because you are convinced that it is a normal state and that one can't do otherwise.

But the moment you know that it is an absolutely abnormal state, contrary to the Truth, how does it happen that it can be repeated? It is simply because you are not convinced. It's because when you have the experience of the divine Presence it seems to you something fabulous, miraculous and extraordinary, and almost abnormal. And so "This sublime state—how can I keep it? It is absolutely contrary to my own existence." But this indeed is the stupidity. For this sublime state is the natural state, and it's what you constantly are that is not natural but a falsification, a deformation—you see, a state which is not normal.

But to have the knowledge and live in the Truth—this indeed is the normal state. Then, how does it happen that once you have had it—it is over, the abnormal state disappears, you become normal and live in the Truth. Once one is in the Truth, how does one manage to come out of it again?

Quite simply it's that you have not entered totally into the Truth, and only one part of yourself has had the experience and the others don't yet have it, and then you don't remain in this part of yourself which had the experience and begin to live in other parts which do not have it yet, and all these parts must have this experience one after another.

This is the reply to my question, this is what you should have told me. Why, it is because we are not made of a single piece and the piece which had the

experience is not the only one in us and is not always there, it is replaced by all kinds of other pieces which have not yet had the experience and must have it That's why

But truly speaking, it is not inevitable Because even if the part which had the experience and knows is no longer right in front and master of the consciousness, if it is replaced by another part which is still in the ignorance, that's no reason for forgetting the other, for that other part is also yourself, and remains yourself, and is there Why forget it? Why, when the obscure, unconscious and ignorant part comes up, why not put it immediately face to face with the other—like this—so that the other may show it that it is in the ignorance? This everybody can do. It's only a question of wanting it We are not obliged to fall back into error, we are not obliged to fall back into obscurity, ignorance and stupidity

It is because something in us, through cowardice or defeatism, accepts this If one did not accept it, it wouldn't happen

Even when everything seems to be suddenly darkened, the flame and the Light are always there. And if one doesn't forget them, one has only to put in front of them the part which is dark, there will perhaps be a battle, there will perhaps be a little difficulty, but it will be something quite transitory; never will you lose your footing

That is why it is said—and it is something true—that to sin through ignorance may have fatal consequences, because when one makes mistakes, well, these mistakes have results, that's obvious, and usually external and material results; but that's no great harm, I have already told you this several times But when one knows what is true, when one has seen and had the experience of the Truth, to accept the sin again, that is, fall back again into ignorance and obscurity—this is indeed an infinitely more serious mistake It begins to belong to the domain of ill-will In any case, it is a sign of slackness and weakness It means that the will is weak

So your question is put the other way round. Instead of asking yourself how to keep it, you must ask yourself: How does one not keep it? Not having it, is a state which everybody is in before the moment of knowing, not knowing—one is in that state before knowing But once one knows one cannot forget And if one forgets, it means that there is something which consents to the forgetting, it means there is an assent somewhere; otherwise one would not forget.

“THE MAN OF SORROWS” AND THE DIVINE FORCE FROM NIRODBARAN’S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

January 19, 1936

I realise at every moment that I am not made for the path of the Spirit, neither for any big endeavour in life. I know I shall be unhappy, but are all men born to be happy?

MAN of sorrows! Man of sorrows!! Knock him off, man, knock him off!!

Man of sorrows? Knock him off? Well, it is too cryptic or brief for me. I'm not much satisfied with the answer. The most fundamental difficulty I find in me is that I can't believe that the Divine will do everything for me. My experience shows, say for instance in writing poetry, that I have to labour a lot to deliver even a small poem. Where then is the Divine help? You yourself had to concentrate four or five hours a day for many years, before things flowed in a torrent Dilip also had to concentrate a lot But I am neither Sri Aurobindo nor Dilip I don't feel, except very rarely, any descent of Force, ether. I can't meditate, I can't pray, I can't aspire, and without these things how am I to do Yoga? Sometimes I think I should not bother my head at all Let me go on reading novels like Anilkumar (I don't mean any offence, though) who can read throughout the night. But how can he? He must have got something. I can't do it, for it would not give me peace and progress in sadhana. So in short my condition is I can neither make effort myself, nor can I believe that you will do everything for me Please give an answer that will pierce the mind-soul

As there are several lamentations today besieging me, I have very little time to deal with each separate Jeremiad. Do I understand rightly that your contention is this, “I can't believe in the Divine doing everything for me because it is by my own mighty and often fruitless efforts that I write or do not write poetry and have made myself into a poet ” Well, that itself is *épatant*, magnificent, unheard of. It has always been supposed since the infancy of the human race that while a verse-maker can be made or self-made, a poet cannot. “*Poeta nascitur non fit*”, a poet is born not made, is the dictum that has come down through the centuries and millenniums and was thundered into my ears by the first pages of my Latin Grammar. The facts of literary history seem to justify this stern saying But here in Pondicherry we have tried, not to manufacture poets, but to give them birth, a spiritual, not a physical birth into the body In a number of instances we are supposed to have succeeded—one of these is your noble self—or if I am to

believe the man of sorrows in you, your abject, miserable, hopeless and ineffectual self. But how was it done? There are two theories, it seems—one that it was by the Force, the other that it was done by your own splashing, kicking, groaning Herculean efforts. Now, sir, if it is the latter, if you have done that unprecedented thing, made yourself by your own laborious strength into a poet (for your earlier efforts were only very decent literary exercises), then, sir, why the deuce are you so abject, self-depreciatory, miserable? Don't say that it is only a poet who can produce no more than a few poems in many months. Even to have done that, to have become a poet at all, a self-made poet is a miracle over which we can only say 'Sabash! Sabash!' without ever stopping. If your effort could do that, what is there that it can't do? All miracles can be effected by it and a giant self-confident faith ought to be in you. On the other hand if, as I aver, it is the Force that has done it, what then can it not do? Here too faith, a giant faith is the only logical conclusion. So either way there is room only for Hallelujahs, none for Jeremiads. Q.E D

By the way what is this story about my four or five hours' concentration a day for several years before anything came down? Such a thing never happened, if by concentration you mean laborious meditation. What I did was four or five hours a day Pranayam—which is quite another matter. And what flow do you speak of? The flow of poetry came down while I was doing Pranayam, not some years afterwards. If it is the flow of experiences, that did come after some years, but after I had stopped the Pranayam for a long time and was doing nothing and did not know what to do or where to turn once all my efforts had failed. And it came not as a result of years of Pranayam or concentration, but in a ridiculously easy way, by the grace either of a temporary guru (but it wasn't that, for he was himself bewildered by it) or by the grace of the eternal Brahman and afterwards by the grace of Mahakali and Krishna. So don't try to turn me into an argument against the Divine, that attempt will be perfectly ineffective.

I am obliged to stop—if I go on, there will be no Pranam till 12 o'clock. So send your Jeremiad back tonight and I will see what else to write. Have written this in a headlong hurry—I hope it is not full of *lapsus calami*

*

January 20, 1936

I send you the "Jeremiad", Sir. My observations are reserved. Anyway, you have succeeded in almost chasing away the clouds of depression

To continue. The fact that you don't feel a force does not prove that it is not there. The steam-engine does not feel a force moving it, but the force is there. A man is not a steam-engine? He is very little better, for he is conscious only of

some bubbling on the surface which he calls himself and is absolutely unconscious of all the subconscious, subliminal, superconscious forces moving him (This is a fact which is being more and more established by modern psychology though it has got hold only of the lower forces and not the higher, so you need not turn up your rational nose at it) He twitters intellectually (=foolishly), about the surface results and attributes them all to his 'noble self', ignoring the fact that this noble self is hidden far away from his own vision behind the veil of his dimly sparkling intellect and the reeking fog of his vital feelings, emotions, impulses, sensations and impressions So your argument is utterly absurd and futile Our aim is to bring the secret forces out and unwallled into the open so that instead of getting some shadows or lightnings of themselves out through the veil or being wholly obstructed, they may "pour down" and "flow in a river". But to expect that all at once is a presumptuous demand which shows an impatient ignorance and inexperience If they begin to trickle at first, that is sufficient to justify the faith in a future downpour You admit that you once or twice felt a force coming down and delivering a poem out of you (your opinion about its worth or worthlessness is not worth a cent, that is for others to pronounce). That is sufficient to blow the rest of your Jeremiad into smithereens; it proves that the force was and is there and at work and it is only your sweating Herculean labour that prevents your feeling it Also it is the trickle that gives assurance of the possibility of the downpour. One has only to go on and by one's patience deserve the downpour or else, without deserving, stick on till one gets it In Yoga itself the experience that is a promise and foretaste but gets shut off till the nature is ready for the fulfilment is a phenomenon familiar to every Yogin when he looks back on his past experience Such were the brief visitations of Ananda you had some time before It does not matter if you have not a leechlike tenacity—leeches are not the only type of Yogins If you can stick anyhow or get stuck that is sufficient The fact that you are not Sri Aurobindo (who said you were?) is an inapt irrelevance One needs only to be oneself in a reasonable way and shake off the hump when it is there or allow it to be shaken off without clinging to it with a leechlike tenacity worthy of a better cause

All the rest is dreary stuff of the tamasic ego As there is a rajasic ego which shouts "What a magnificent powerful sublime divine individual I am, unique and peerless" (of course there are gradations in the pitch), so there is a tamasic ego which squeaks "What an abject, hopeless, worthless, incapable, unluckily unendowed and uniquely impossible creature I am,—all, all are great, Aurobindos, Dilips, Anilkumars (great by an unequalled capacity of novel-reading and self-content, according to you), but I, oh I, oh I!" That's your style. It is this tamasic ego (of course it expresses itself in various ways at various times, I am only rendering your present pitch) which is responsible for the Man of Sorrows getting in It's all bosh—stuff made up to excuse the luxury of laziness, melancholy and despair You are in that bog just now because you have

descended faithfully and completely into the inert stupidity and die-in-the-mudness of your physical consciousness which, I admit, is a specimen! But so after all is everybody's, only there are different kinds of specimens. What to do? Dig yourself out if you can; if you can't, call for ropes and wait till they come. If God knows what will happen when the Grace descends, that is enough, isn't it? That you don't know is a fact which may be baffling to your—well, your intelligence, but is not of great importance—any more than your supposed unfitness. Whoever was fit, for that matter—fitness and unfitness are only a way of speaking; man is unfit and a misfit (so far as things spiritual are concerned)—in his outward nature. But within there is a soul and above there is Grace. “This is all you know or need to know” and, if you don't, well, even then you have at least somehow stumbled into the path and have got to remain there till you get hauled along it far enough to wake up to the knowledge. Amen

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

PLEASE forgive my inordinate delay in replying to your earnest letter asking for my interpretation of two verbal problems in Sri Aurobindo's early poetry
In the lines (p 7 of *Collected Poems*)—

Perfect thy motion ever within me,
Master of mind—

it is possible to take "Perfect" as either a semi-exclamatory frontally projected adjective or as a verb in the imperative mood. The choice has to be guided by the suggestion, if any, in the succeeding lines. What follows is:

Grey of the brain, flash of the lightning,
Brilliant and blind,
These thou linkest, the world to mould,
Writing the thought in a scroll of gold,
Violet-lined

A sense of wonder is felt here. The second stanza too breathes a similar sense:

Tablet of brain thou hast made for thy writing,
Master divine
Calmly thou writest or full of thy grandeur
Flushed as with wine,
Then with a laugh thou erasest the scroll,
Bringing another, like waves that roll
And sink supine

The astonishing skill of the "master divine" is delineated in telling strokes. Can we take the poet to be marvelling at the highest effects of inspiration brought about by the "Master of mind"? Surely it is not possible to think of the poet as considering everything he writes to be perfect? But the general tone does allow this possibility. If we fight shy of such an interpretation we are led to look on "Perfect" as your friend does, so that the poem becomes "Primarily a prayer of the poet"

The adverb "ever" in the opening line is dually significant. The Master may have been admiringly told that his "motion" is always "perfect"—or else the poet appeals to him to keep on perfecting "within me" this "motion". But if the "motion" is at all times what it is portrayed in the poem, there seems hardly any room left for further inspired proficiency: it appears to be already "perfect". So, unwilling to understand the poet to be telling us that he is always a marvellous

writer under the ruling hand of the “Master”, I am inclined to make the poem refer to his inspiration only at its highest pitch. I must confess, though, that such a reference is not explicit. Perhaps we may aver the poem to mean that when the “Master divine” takes charge, all is flawless at every moment. Then the unexpressed implication would be that there are occasions when the “Master of mind” is not directly present and active with the result that the work is not impeccable.

The poem is indeed complex and a final meaning cannot be completely disentangled.

Your other query is more easily answered. To get that answer into focus it is advisable to look at the whole last stanza of “To a Hero-Worshipper” (pp. 8-9):

No herald of the Sun am I,
 But in a moon-lit veil
 A russet nightingale
 Who pours sweet song, he knows not why,
 Who pours like a wine a gurgling note
 Paining with sound his swarthy throat,
 Who pours sweet song, he recks not why,
 Nor hushes ever lest he die

Your comment on the last line is “If the word ‘lest’ is taken as per the ordinary meaning ‘for fear that’ it does not sound appropriate. I feel the meaning should be taken as ‘for reason less than’ as per the old English usage, from which the word ‘lest’ has been derived. In that case the meaning of the phrase would be—‘the nightingale does not ever hush for reason less than that of his death’. Another meaning suggested is that the nightingale does not ever hush because it would indicate his death. Which of these two is appropriate?”

I am afraid you are being unnecessarily puzzled. Both of your two meanings are far-fetched, the first especially so. The significance you reject is the only one possible in a straightforward reading. In modern English the last line can only mean that to the nightingale the act of singing is very life so that to stop singing would be to risk death. All the preceding lines picture this bird as song embodied—there is no formulable reason for his singing—it is just his mode of being alive. If he “hushes ever”, he would run the danger of being dead.

The only question possible to raise apropos of the stanza is in regard to the word “veil” in line 2. Could it be a misreading for “vale”? Or is “veil” used to suggest that the nightingale sings from a hidden place, shielded from eyes by thick foliage made bright by moonlight? We may remember Milton:

the wakeful bird
 Sings darkling, and in shadiest covert hid

Tunes her nocturnal note ¹

By the way, it is interesting from the literary point of view that Keats, writing his "Ode to a Nightingale" two hundred years after Milton's day, brings in the same somewhat unusual usage "darkling." While Milton applies the adjective meaning "in the dark" to the bird, Keats refers to himself "Darkling I listen."
(14 6 1992)

*

As always, I was very glad to hear from you. But the news you give of yourself is hardly comforting. What is of comfort is that you are holding on with undiminished courage and even turning your troubles into occasions for going closer to our Divine Mother. About one trouble in the future I can assure you that you can take it quite lightly. I mean the cataract-operation. I have had both my eyes operated on for cataracts—of course, not at the same time—and from the very next day I was reading the press-proofs of *Mother India* with the other non-bandaged eye. People keep frightening one about movement. I was told "Once somebody shook his head and everything got spoiled. So do take care." Very solemnly I said "Yes" again and again and kept nodding in support of that strong affirmative! Nothing untoward happened, though my adviser was shocked and feared the worst. At the end of the six days you can go home. And when the treated eye first opens again on the world, there is a wonderful revelation. The whole world appears bathed in a most clear white light, such as you haven't seen ever in your life. And when the glasses come, the contours of earth's manifold existence and mobility are so keenly etched that you feel you are on the verge of being told some secret beyond them—those sharp lines seem to tear some veil and give a glimpse of the Ineffable.

The use you are making of your body's sufferings renders those sufferings worthwhile. Not that you have invoked them—they have come of themselves but you have not let them go waste. They have served as spurs to the inmost being—they have called it forth not only to surmount them but also to let their poignancy become a call to the Divine Grace, the Saviour Love which draws the eternal child in you close to the radiance of the Infinite Mother. The sharper the pain, the intenser the cry for the supreme all-soothing Presence. The pain turns into a short cut—a sharply swift passage to a sacred Sweetness which helps the hidden soul to overflow, as it were, and permeate more and more the outer consciousness, even the bodily consciousness. Thus you have had both the inspired wit and the intuitive wisdom to create out of your hardships stepping-stones for a two-way traffic between you and your Masters
(1 7 1992)

¹ *Paradise Lost*, Book III, lines 38-40

*

Almost daily I have been receiving your SOS's and I would like very much to serve—in whatever small way possible—as our Gurus' channel, to help you. Let me make certain points clear.

One who has been touched by the light of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother cannot ever close his eyes to it. So it is no use thinking of making such a person give up sadhana. But this light carries with it a great peace and if it does not establish that peace, there is something wrong in the recipient. Perhaps he is pulling at it too much. Perhaps he is too frantic and wishes to achieve the highest at one leap. I have advised equanimity as the basis of sadhana, but it is necessary to acquire a poise even with regard to the spiritual force. Do not be over-enthusiastic, over-zealous. Proceed calmly, slowly. You seem sometimes to be in a sort of fever for Yoga. This is not advisable—especially for a disposition which is liable to be unstable. The notion that spiritual practice is in itself an upsetter is a mistake, but if proper conditions for it are not observed, there can be temporary upheavals. A beginner should not forget that he is a beginner and must learn to accept small gains with gratitude. Earnest prayer for progress is good, but if progress is slow don't force yourself to big efforts. Be as normal as you can, have normal relations with your family and friends. Don't consider yourself as someone special who needs to stand aloof.

The "fear-complex" that has again gripped you is partly due to your not feeling at home with your surroundings, not feeling yourself to be a natural part of the people you are with. If you have a spiritual ideal, keep it steady yet without drawing a line dividing you from general humanity. A change of attitude will be to some extent a help towards getting rid of the "fear-complex". And as an aid to acquiring normalcy continue with the psychiatrist's prescriptions. Try also to realise that you are in the saving gracious hands of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. No ultimate harm can come to you. There is no reason for any fear. Can you put your finger on any particular occasion or incident that sparked off this resurgence of an old complaint which, according to all signs, had substantially disappeared? I say "substantially" with a purpose. For, even when the substance of a thing vanishes, a shadow of it can linger in the subconscious and rise up under some unusual circumstances. Offer it to your divine Gurus without any agitation and be sure that it will vanish. Do not give it unnecessary strength by imagining that the very substance has come back. At this moment of writing to you I feel a great peace enveloping me and emanating from me and wafting towards you. It is the peace that comes from feeling constantly the presence of our two Masters, the one as if descending from a freedom above the mind and settling sweetly in the deep heart, the other as if emerging from the deep heart's sweetness and enveloping us with the vast serenities of the "overhead".

(17 7 1992)

There has been quite a flood of letters from you. Let me respond with at least a respectable trickle. The one which interested me most was that which gives an account of your daily programme of sadhana and work. It is good that in the midst of your work you snatch moments of inwardness during which you re-establish equanimity and strengthen the attitude of "remember and offer." But there should not be too big a division between these moments and the work in hand. During the work itself there should be a growing background-consciousness of calm and self-giving. Or, if such a background is not easy to develop at present, let there be small pauses during which you do the dedication. Thus work itself will be a part of sadhana in a more direct manner than now. Then, if you have the enthusiasm to practise Yoga, work will be a mode of moving towards the Mother and therefore a most welcome thing. I believe that the best procedure for you is to conceive your studies as well as your daily medical activity as your central sadhana. You have not yet properly woven them into your role as the Mother's child. Once you see and accept them as your main path of Yoga, you will develop your true relationship with the Divine. You have made too sharp a distinction between two dimensions of your life.

When I read of your morning programme before going to work, I had a strong impression of the cleavage you seem to make between the sadhak in you and the evolving medico. An hour and a half of walking with a book of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in your hand and doing Yoga in a supposedly concentrated manner is to my mind a somewhat artificial strain on your nerves. Half an hour of absorption in Yoga with or without a book in the morning is sufficient for you at present. And when you come out of your absorption, there should be a kind of soft halo of equanimity and self-consecration going with you which will serve as a protective presence of the Mother and suffuse whatever you do—study or work—with her sweetly intense nearness which is yet "distance-haunted" by all the depth beyond depth of Soul and Spirit which she keeps waiting for you. At the end of the day you may again have a half-hour of inner absorption. In the meantime you should be more relaxed in your being, with an easy poise affably in touch with the outer world. The outer world begins with your own family with whom you should cultivate cordial relationship as a part of your Yoga.

The "fear-complex" will not recur if you have a greater relaxation in your inner-outer consciousness. You have a keen sense of insecurity—especially with regard to your future. There is also an uncertainty about your spiritual status. You have to proceed in your sadhana without too much self-concern, too much asking, "Am I progressing adequately? Will I be a first-rate follower of Sri Aurobindo, a full-fledged child of the Mother?" Perhaps there is a streak of unacknowledged ambition—a jealousy of Nolini and Champaklal and Pavitra and Dyuman, possibly even of stumbling, fumbling and still onward-rumbling Amal Kiran! On the other hand, you underrate your own powers of intelligence

and application and industry, your own possibilities of being a proficient M D. All sorts of contradictory movements have got entwined in your subconscious. Stop worrying and brooding—make a clear peaceful space within you for your true soul with its outward as well as inward radiance, its happy humility and its confidence in God's grace. If any vague "fear" hovers around you, think of it as absolutely a force external to you and instead of fighting with it head-on, turn away and distract or divert your mind to reading or talking or going out for a stroll, and at the same time calmly live in the Mother's presence and invoke its grace. (7 7 1992)

*

About the readings made by the Shuka Nadi Foundation of Bangalore, my information is that the so-called "Bhrigu Leaves" are not always right. Experience has shown them to be a mixed bag, quite frequently off the mark. Of course, the most important question for you is whether they are right in saying that you will have God-realisation. You have put me the question about this most anxiously. If I give some sort of answer, please don't think I am a seer or saint. I can answer from my own inner experiments.

It is not possible to say prophetically that you *will* have God-realisation but you certainly *can* have it in one particular sense. God-realisation is of various kinds. Briefly, three kinds have been indicated by Sri Aurobindo: the psychic, the spiritual, the supramental. The supramental is all-transformative, divinising every part of us, including the very body. The spiritual comprises the universal Self of selves as well as light, peace, power, knowledge and Ananda descending from "overhead". The psychic is the discovery of our true soul which is hidden in the depths of the heart-centre and which is perpetually in the presence of the Individual Personal Divine because it is itself put forth by the Divine as a centre of individual, personal yet non-egoistic manifestation in the evolutionary process on earth. As the psychic being is within ourselves it can surely be realised and with its realisation you will live constantly in the presence of divinity, an object of worship, a source of bliss, a shaft of illumined feeling guiding you at all times in all circumstances.

The way to this realisation is, according to me, twofold: "Equanimity, immune to hurt and mishap, which tends to carry one towards a reflection within us of the vast silent Self which is ever free—and the persistent undisturbed remembrance of the Personal Divine (who, for me, is Sri Aurobindo and the Mother) and the sincere offering of all our movements and all happenings to this God-figure, a gesture which will eventually bring you a deep delightful dynamism full of the concrete experience of God within and without." (7 6 1991)

*

I am jotting down for you—as you want—the names of a few works of fiction as they just come to my mind. The first is the one I looked for in my cupboard after telling you about Agatha Christie's pen-name before she invented Hercule Poirot and Miss Marples as arch-detectives and became a celebrity. For sheer literary creativeness and penetrating psychological finesse, I believe the future will remember her for that early book, *Absent in the Spring* (a phrase from a line in Shakespeare's sonnets) published under the pseudonym Mary Westmacott. The book is a Dell paperback. I find that on the title-page I have written on 8 August 1967: "I think it is the deepest and subtlest book Agatha Christie has written. Definitely worth reading—it has the making of a great book or rather it is a great book caught in a miniature glimpse, as it were"

My opinion on somewhat similar lines is about the work of that most popular writer, Edgar Wallace. Unlike Christie's "Whodunits", none of his potboilers will survive, but future critics may chance upon one novel of his unlike anything else he wrote. It is called *Masters of Souls*, an original and powerful work. As I don't have a copy I can't tell you the publisher's name.

Galsworthy is a writer of a higher calibre on the whole and his Forsythe Saga has become world-famous. Surely it is worth reading, especially the very first in the series: *A Man of Property*. But, according to me, the two best things he has done are the novel *Fraternity* and the drama *Strife*. The former creates a character, an old man, who might have walked out of the Upanishads in a modern dress and suggested the play of the Atman, the infinite Self of selves, in disguise among a present-day set of circumstances. *Strife* has two levels of interaction—one is the outer on which employer is pitted against employees with an obstinate will, the other is the inner where the employer's heart is at work in a secret league with the poor employees' wives and children who must suffer because of the conflict. They receive anonymous food-packets all during their trying days.

Two novels I remember having enjoyed in the far past for their sensitive perceptions are *The City of Beautiful Nonsense* by E. Temple Thurston, and Richard Aldington's *All Men are Enemies*. Aldington is known most for his war-books, but this is a most charmingly yet most unostentatiously written document of the inmost heart of young love. It is indeed an exquisite piece of insight. Another book of rare insight matched with style is *A Well Full of Leaves* by Elizabeth Myers and so too is *Gone to Earth* by Mary Webb (both in the Penguin Paperbacks).

A couple on a still finer and deeper level are *The Fountain* by Charles Morgan and *A Many-splendoured Thing* by Han Suyin (the latter in the Penguin Series). Both are indubitable masterpieces by their psychological penetration and literary art.

If you care for a high-class detective thriller, a book well written with a well organised plot, I offer *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Conan Doyle. His next

best story-telling in matter of grip and surprise is the second part of his later book, *The Valley of Fear*. The title of *The Hound* reminds me of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Hardy is a great short-story writer too and in the same genre I would recommend Somerset Maugham's collection under the title, *The Casuarina Tree*. Here I would put in a word for Daphne du Maurier's collection, *Kiss me Again, Stranger*. The story which gives the book its title didn't appeal to me, but among the rest there are four or five which are perfect. Conan Doyle's short tales in *The Adventures of Brigadier Gérard* are extremely enjoyable and the Gallic touch in them adds to the relish.

Turning directly to France I must speak up for one of the mightiest no less than finest creations in world literature, *Les Misérables* of Victor Hugo. A contemporary of Hugo's, equally famous as he, was Balzac who is the most prolific creator of living characters after Shakespeare. So intense is the life-force in his characters that someone has said that even his scullions have genius. To my mind his masterpiece is not the popular *Old Goriot* or *Eugénie Grandet* but *Cousin Betty*, an extremely subtle study in jealousy. Here, in passing, I must not forget Anatole France's *The Gods are Athirst*.

Among recent English fiction on a grand scale I am enthusiastic about *Anthony Adverse*. I forget the author's name. It is a work of prodigious talent verging on genius, a more vivid and deeper novel than the spectacularly popular *Gone with the Wind*. As with this book, a film has been made of it, but in black-and-white and with many cuts in the story. *Anthony Adverse* amply deserves a full-length technicolour production. Talking of films I must never forget *Billy Budd* based on Melville's tale. The chief character in the film is the truest representation I have witnessed of a youth ruled by what we Aurobindonians have come to call the Psychic Being. Innocence, sincerity, purest love and natural bravery have hardly ever been acted out as in that short film. The plot is tragic but the tears will not be only for the tragedy but also for the piercing expression of the true soul in one at every step. I must get hold of the written original of Melville and see whether the psychic is disclosed in action there too. An emergence of the psychic, though in a conventional mode, is part also of Wassermann's huge many-layered picture of the human condition in his novel *The World's Illusion*. So much for fiction for now. (1990)

AMAL KIRAN
(K.D. SETHNA)

· THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of December 1992)

The Mother's Message

This is the
interesting story of
how a being discovered
the Divine Life



THE Mother and I were absorbed in our *Savitri* paintings

She valued more the true feeling and right consciousness than only precise and decorative work without vibrations and vividness. She put stress on "White Light without shadow".

It is the vibration of Light which alone can give life and colour to every scene painted

The Mother gave a proper training to my hands. In 1956 she asked me to clean the inside of her two carved cupboards which are in the Meditation Hall

upstairs so that I might learn to hold the most precious, delicate and fragile objects with steadiness, great care and concentration. She made my hands conscious and sensitive by putting her Force, Light and Consciousness

She also sent me thousands of the most exquisite picture-cards so that I might perceive and grasp their beauties and obtain inspiration from Nature: trees, flowers, mountains, rivers, animals and so on. These cards were prepared by Champaklal. He used to paste the pictures on folders on which the Mother wrote to me

Surely, the Mother did not take up the *Savitri*-work abruptly. She educated me both outwardly and inwardly knowing that these types of paintings were not of the common kind or child's play.

This training went on for years with patience and perseverance. Nobody knew of it!

It is impossible for me to give the full description of all the *Savitri*-paintings here. But I shall try to convey glimpses of some of them

The Mother explained to me the sixth picture of Book One Canto One:

“All can be done if the God-touch is there
A hope stole . . . moment's brink,

“Child, you must show in your painting the rays of White Light streaming out from all the fingers of ‘A wandering hand’ ”

In reality, from the occult point of view the White Light flowed from the Mother's own fingers.

On 4th November 1961, she made me understand the eighth picture of the same book, the same canto:

“The darkness failed and slipped like a falling cloak
From the reclining body of a god ”

She went into a deep meditation for quite a long time. When she opened her eyes, I felt as if she were still dreaming. The Mother said:

“I saw in 1904 the vision of a Spirit when I went into the Inconscient. The form of this Spirit was neither of man nor of woman. Nor was it Vishnu or Shiva or Krishna ”

Once again she closed her eyes to recall what she had seen in the fathomless darkness. When she awoke she instructed me

“Child, you must paint a pale gold reclining figure of a God. His right cheek

is resting on his right palm. His head with long golden hair is on a white cushion. And in the background you must show a myriad rainbow hues of opals. Also the black colour of the darkness sliding off from Him ”

It was difficult to paint rainbow colours. I could not finish the painting.
That very night I had a vision.

The shimmering waves of the divine white Light enveloped me as they turned into brilliant multi-colours. They were in gradations—from pale blue to night sky—from shell-pink to deepest crimson—from pale green to Nile green. The same with the rest of the hues

Then suddenly they assumed the faces of beautiful beings—but their lower bodies were like trails of different colours. These beings mingled with one another, yet retained their individualities. Their dancing movements were like music—the tinkle—the chime of numerous bells echoing and reechoing through the sweet silence of eternity. My eyes drank the melody of the vivid, various colours with as much joy as I would have had hearing an excellent ethereal symphony in perfect harmony in the Divine Light.

This was an ecstasy—an indescribable thrill. I was floating upward into a realm of glory beyond anything I had ever beheld—ever known.

My vision reminds me of Sri Aurobindo's poem—“The Life Heavens”
—*Collected Poems, Birth Centenary Vol. 5, p. 574:*

“... sounds, colours, joy-flamings—Life lies here
Dreaming, bound to the heavens of its goal.
In the clasp of a Power that enthral to sheer
Bliss and beauty body and rapt soul . . .”

Indeed, *Savitri*-paintings were expressed in multi-colours to accord with the twelve dimensions known to occultism.

The next morning I finished the picture and showed it to the Mother in the afternoon. She clasped my hands, looked into my eyes for a moment or two and gave a kiss on my forehead. Her gesture conveyed to me everything.

My memory winged back to the year 1958.

On 8th February, in the evening the Mother and I met. She looked at me for a few seconds and plunged into deep meditation. I could not care less, did not respond, did not concentrate. My vagrant thoughts rambled on. She was serenely peaceful, unruffled, untouched.

The Mother opened her eyes and said with great regret

“Just now I saw in my vision beautiful luminous beings from above bringing precious gifts for you. They wished to enter your whole being with these boons. But unhappily, you were completely shut up and denied them. So they went back where they had come from.”

There were no tears in my eyes—only solid, unutterable despair.
 The Mother looked at me and smiled—a sad smile I failed to collaborate, to receive, to assimilate. I was sick—very sick in my heart, mind and body
 She leaned from her couch, patted my cheeks and affirmed:

“The luminous beings will return one day and enter your whole being.”

So they came back to me by the Divine’s Grace.

*

The *Savitri*-paintings left me day after day in wonder.

The Mother took me with her to the world of true art—the world of Beauty from where all the inspiration came—a world of ecstatic joy, unbounded happiness—a world of magnificence.

Sri Aurobindo has written:

“The Mother believes in beauty as a part of spiritual and divine living.”

On 6th November the Mother met me in the morning in the Meditation Hall upstairs and explained to me the ninth picture:

“A glamour from the unreached transcendences
 Iridescent with.....in the hours ”

She drew a faint line here and there on a piece of paper, I could hardly make out anything. The Mother wished me to use various colours for the painting. She asked me:

“Have you seen the dawn?”

I said: “No, Mother, because I work late at night, I cannot get up early to see the dawn. I am sorry.”

She laughed softly and left me in an ambiguous state.

I was terribly nervous when I reached my apartment. Tears welled up in my eyes and I thought again and again: “Why, O why, did I take up this difficult work?” My anger rose to match the situation.

Then at last I dragged myself towards the easel in my studio, I sat on a chair, squeezed out several colours at random on the palette and started blindly giving strokes here and there on a board with one single brush, without thinking, caring or even trying to sketch the Dawn.

In the afternoon I went to the Mother. She looked at the picture—a meditative gleam in her eyes—and said:

“Oh, it is excellent!”

I frowned with perplexity. She laughed and said.

“You see, while I was taking my lunch, I was thinking that I did not quite make the girl understand how to paint the Dawn. How is she getting on with it? Meanwhile, I saw Sri Aurobindo in a vision. He informed me that I should not worry about the girl, she is getting on well with the painting. And now I can see what he meant!”

At that very moment I was made to understand that not only did the Mother’s Consciousness help me in this work but Sri Aurobindo’s Consciousness too played its role admirably.

According to Sri Aurobindo,

“Dawn always means an opening of some kind—the coming of something that is not yet fully there ”

On 8th morning the Mother instructed me about the tenth picture

“On life’s thin border awhile the Vision stood
And bent over earth’s pondering forehead curve ”

The Mother saw my picture in the afternoon and liked it

I drew her attention to the arms of the Vision “Mother, aren’t they too long?” She assured me:

“Never mind, they are impressive and symbolic ”

Then she got up from her high-backed carved chair, came very close to me, looked at my face with her luminous gaze for a few minutes, cupped it in her hands and said firmly

“Now, just now I saw a beautiful, brilliant face of an angel—one day it will come out ”

She kissed me on my forehead and bade me “Au revoir”

In the domain of our souls there are numerous beautiful beings or angels. When the Mother spoke, she always meant the spiritual and occult truths, which are beyond our comprehension

*

The Mother interpreted the sixteenth picture:

“Affranchised from the respite of fatigue
Once more the rumour. burden of his fate ”

She remarked:

“In this painting, there is a purpose behind. One likes to see it over and over again. Man is an ignorant being and yet he is an exception in Nature ”

*

On 17th November 1961 the Mother explained to me the seventeenth picture:

“And Savitri too awoke among these tribes
That hastened to join.. door of ecstasy.”

She did the sketch in front of me and told me about the colour-scheme:

“Child, when you paint Savitri’s portrait, you must see that throughout you have to paint the same face but with various expressions. Different features will look odd.”

I asked her about Savitri’s complexion. The Mother said:

“Why, fair Indian complexion—ivory—sunny ivory complexion.”

I inquired: “Mother, what is sunny ivory?” She leaned a little forward from her chair, patted my arms and said with a smile

“Like your complexion.”

I blushed. Yes, at that time I had a very fair complexion I remember the Mother always admired it As the years passed, gradually the awful weather, constant psychological struggle, perpetual assaults of the invisible entities, setbacks, sufferings and difficulties spoiled my skin considerably However, the essential thing in life, I believe, is the charm and beauty of the soul

*

On 19th November the Mother made me understand the nineteenth picture of Book One Canto One:

“Inflicting on the heights the abysm’s law
It sullies with its mire.....death and pain.”

She did the sketch and asked me to show blood oozing from Savitri's hands and right foot.

When the Mother saw the painting she said

“The expression of Savitri is very good indeed.”

Now it was 24th November—the Darshan day The Mother distributed to people this message which appealed to me very much

“It is by a constant inner growth that one can find constant newness and unfailing interest in life There is no other satisfying way ”

—Sri Aurobindo

*

On the morning of the 25th, when I went to the Mother, she received me cordially and with a smile she lifted from a nearby stool a Russian art-piece—an Icon—the Virgin of Vladimir and the Child

She informed me:

“You see, my child, how beautifully an artist has painted these images. This precious piece travelled all the way from Russia to the Ashram Originally it belonged to the Czar's treasures. They were scattered during the revolution in Russia ”

I found it exceedingly lovely—full of feeling and vibrations

Much later in the 1980s I asked Champaklal to show me the Icon to revive my memory. He informed me that it was in the Art Gallery. Then I got it from Krishnalal and Vasudev and kept it in my apartment for some time in order to clean it and concentrate on it.

I put it in my meditation room one day and switched off the light and burned a candle To my utter amazement I saw the Icon as living—and felt as if the Virgin would speak to me The effect of the light on the Icon was fascinating.

Later, I took it to Champaklal He saw it, and was pleased with the cleaning Then I returned it to the Art Gallery along with the text which I had got from Mme Luce Huguette Raymond *alias* “Padma”, the name given by the Mother

Padma had received the Icon from her friend Christiane Roll-Mackie—the Mother had named her “Sahadja” She had a friend called Georges who got this Icon from an Ukrainian friend of his who in his turn had received it from the Patriarch of Moscow

This Icon came into Sahadja's hands in 1959 and she gave it to Padma in 1961.

Padma offered it to the Mother on 25 11.61. On that day the Mother gave me also an interview.

Now this most wonderful Icon is in *Shri Smriti* where all the Mother's belongings are preserved and exhibited

The size of the Icon is 22.5 cm × 18.5 cm. The thickness is 2.2 cm

There is a metal sheet with intricate golden and silver designs on it, enchanting flowers, leaves and symmetrical forms. It is the top of a case in which the painted Icon is placed.

Through six holes in the sheet one can see the painted figures of the Virgin and Child. Their dresses are shown on the gilded sheet. Their haloes too are represented and, like the dresses, they are part of the complex designs. One can see not only faces but also the two hands of the Virgin and a hand and the two feet of the Child.

The expression of the Virgin is perfect love, compassion and care. The Child in her arms is content, care-free, self-giving. His left cheek touches his mother's right cheek. Amazingly the features of the Virgin resemble our Divine Mother in her young age.

In transit the sheet has got slightly pressed down instead of being fully raised.

At its bottom there is in the middle a short inscription in Russian. Its sides are nailed to the sides of the material which is covered with a velvet cloth of a purplish rose-colour.

*

I understood from the Mother the last picture.

“Immobile in herself, she gathered force
This was the day when Satyavan must die.”

The Mother went into a trance. On awaking she told me:

“I want to get printed these paintings of Book One Canto One along with the relevant passages from *Savitri*.

“We name the Book *Meditations on Savitri* ”

Later I typed two copies of the chosen passages and stuck one behind the painting boards and the other in the dummy I had prepared of *Meditations on Savitri*

Something struck my consciousness—I expressed my feeling to the Mother: “I wish to spend the money realised from my jewellery on this book.” She held my hands and looked at me intently and said:

“It will be done ”

*

On 12th December the Mother called me to the Meditation Hall upstairs and commenced Book One Canto Two

If I will go on writing about the *Savitri*-paintings there will be no end But I will give a bird's-eye view in this regard

The Mother directed me about the paintings by means of her sketches which I copied on canvas boards and sent to her for her approval Afterwards I started the work as she wished including the colour-schemes If I would commit any mistake, she would not spare me!

On 24th December the Mother greeted me with three white roses and a charming smile She read the passage.

“As in a mystic and dynamic dance
A priestess of immaculate ecstasies
Inspired and.. to things beyond.”

Instead of explaining to me through a drawing, the Mother gave me a dancing pose—the right foot was lifted—the right hand came down—the left hand went up. She showed me how the priestess should dance.

This reminds me that in one of her births she was also a priestess in Egypt

*

It was 29th December 1961 I went upstairs, though it was not my day

The Mother after the meditation with Panditji of Rameshwaram came to her parlour and from there she was to go upstairs. As a rule she never talked with anybody after the meditation, but when she saw me she came forward and gave me a yellow rose “Peace”, a red Hibiscus “Power” and a *Beaumontia grandiflora* “Unselfishness: Deeply open so as not to refuse anything ”

Her flitting words before she left for her apartment with a swirl of her gown, leaving a trail of perfume were.

“These flowers are given to me by Panditji Take them ”

I took them with a mixed feeling of gratitude and surprise
This was the end of the year 1961

(*To be continued*)

VOICELESS

THERE is a pain no tears can shed,
An ache as ancient as the East
That sees the Sun ever pass its way
Always toward the West

This is my song of silent note,
Undisturbed by sob or keening cry,
Only sleepless eye and inward ear
Can guess the passage of its flight

This depth of sorrow has its only source
In the anguish wrought on each by woman and man,
The raw distress of the betrayed soul,
The tearless dignity of the downtrodden.

There are no words, no thoughts so deep,
As can plumb the darkneses of mortality
Or cut forever away
Those hidden roots of despair.

How many times must hope be killed,
Light denied and sweetness slain,
Before we understand the profundity of violence,
Or the casual hostility of Fate?

Every time on the verge of joy
My hand has reached a little less far. ..
Like always has it been snatched away,
Unbelievably by the one I loved

Why must I forever aspire for bliss?
Why must this longing endure?
Why not resign myself to pain,
And die alone in the desert?

I will not cry a soundless cry,
I will not stare into the eyes of Fate
How often must I seek her scorching touch
That burns like no hell-fire can?

I accept this world and its thousand barbs,
 My flesh is torn from me as I live,
 Perhaps thus alone may I seek release
 From the constant anguish of loving too much.

ARVIND HABBU

THE CHILD'S FACE

THE child's face
 Wide awake in a silence—
 A far sail in the calm sea of a dream,
 Seeing eyes, unseeing the squalor,
 A sweetness of heaven's breath come to earth,
 A sadness of this puzzling life,
 Wondering simplicity—
 Wondering at an intimate God,
 Wondering at His unseen farness,
 Wondering where its Mother is,
 Wondering what shores are before it—
 The brooding canopy of the evening light
 Confining its world
 Gives no clue to the boat's destiny.
 Ripples turn golden,
 A hope catches fire;
 Ere the day fails
 An ageless love wafting over the waters
 Bearing the wounds of merciless battles
 Caresses the child,
 Weaning its silent sob,
 Crooning a lullaby
 Of the promised coming
 From the war
 Victorious through conflagrate worlds.
 A smile in the mire tempts the sky

DAMODAR REDDY

MATRIMANDIR: AN IMPRESSIONISTIC PICTURE

RISING from the womb of the earth like an apocalyptic vision, a huge ribbed globe, a wonderful feat of architecture! Based on and supported by four concrete pillars, it lifts itself like a great ball and hangs suspended, as it were, in mid-air. This unadorned marvel of nude symbolic beauty stands at the far extremity of the world on a sandy plain. Above, the sunlight dances upon it, the serene blue canopy of the sky stretches endlessly, while below, as far as the eye travels, there is nothing but the thick green foliage of palm, neem, tamarind and eucalyptus. Far away ripple the blue waves of the Bay of Bengal. Such is the unique creation named 'Matrimandir'.

"Whose brain-child is this, God's or man's?" one wonders as one stands in silent contemplation. We have seen the superb Taj Mahal, 'a tear-drop on the cheek of Time', also the Sun Temple of Konarak with its thousand carved images of the three worlds, which held us breathless. And then there are the temples and *gopurams* of the South, rising tier after tier from a broad-based pedestal and tapering to a narrow wedge, pushing into the vast Inane. The famous Swe Dagon pagoda of Rangoon left my young mind stunned with amazement at its golden image of the Buddha seated in calm padmasana majesty, his hand outstretched in a gesture of universal compassion. Even the Eiffel Tower, a stupendous engineering feat, lurks in my memory. But this novel marvel, shorn of all external grandeur, modern in conception, simple in plan—as simple as the orb of the moon—yet in its internal structure beautiful and complex at the same time, bewilders the imagination.

On our first visit, Piero, the engineer, described to us how, when the entire project would be complete and the crystal is placed in its royal centre upon Sri Aurobindo's symbols, the sunbeam would fall upon it; then the walls cased in marble would shine with a quiet glow, and the columns—radiant and puissant—would stand in a circle around the magic globe. Thus from the very summit of the temple, the Sun-God's thousand rays, gathered to a point, would pass through the crystal and right through the building below, into the Earth-Mother's womb in the form of a lotus pond beneath the structure. In this way the Truth-Consciousness would be symbolically united with inconscient matter.

On our second visit a month or so later, we saw that the work had advanced considerably. As we were about to enter the hushed sanctum, the guard gave us white socks to wear, in order to prevent any dust from being carried inside. It was the same hall, but with the great difference that now the crystal had been installed upon Sri Aurobindo's symbols.

All was as Piero had promised, with the ray of light passing through the aperture and striking the crystal in the centre. Whichever way we turned, we saw

the small point of light reflected in the globe After we had passed a few minutes in absorbed silence, we were each given a cushion to sit on, so that we might meditate wherever we liked in the clear-obscure chamber For myself, except for a mystic feeling of profound stillness during my own meditation, I could not enter into any communion with higher occult powers.

When we emerged from the enclosed hall, gorgeous scenery met our eyes. Below us spread an empire of green foliage, with the white, pavilion-like houses of Auroville nestling here and there, and the sea in the distance

In conclusion, I would say that the Matrimandir, even though still in the process of construction, is unique in its conception, architecture and ultimate purpose Nothing like it exists anywhere else With its completion, we shall enter the twenty-first century, anticipating the vast potential of the new era upon the earth that it promises to usher in.

It is interesting to note that Champaklal, even in his enfeebled condition of health towards the end of his life, visited the Matrimandir A group of Aurovilians gave him a wonderful welcome, carrying him up to the central chamber, and receiving his blessings

He visited Matrimandir a number of times during its construction, and on one occasion—on 7th January, 1986—he had a powerful vision there which was later recorded in a Matrimandir Newsletter and the book *Visions of Champaklal* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1990) The following are extracts from the record

As soon as I stepped in, she saturated me I entered an altogether different world I had to struggle to keep my eyes open. The whole of Matrimandir seemed to be rolling from side to side So I opened my eyes and saw that Matrimandir was steady, but again as I shut my eyes, Matrimandir appeared to be tossing and turning like before. Once more I opened my eyes and found that it was stable This happened three times I don't recollect when actually it ceased tumbling. Later it started whirling slowly like a merry-go-round. Suddenly it was spinning very fast. Then its pace slowed down and it began to plunge down, deep down in the abyss Finally when it got settled a marvellous figure was seen As soon as it touched Matrimandir, I do not know what happened but I fell back to my original place inside the Matrimandir

Now the walls were transparent and luminous Then gradually they were interchanging their colours many times. Eventually they appeared to be translucent, of a brilliant and resplendent golden colour I could see very vividly far-off objects on all sides, all in one expansive gaze It was a fantastic sight! Around Matrimandir, up to a certain distance, there were different kinds of beautiful, bright and fascinating flowers and plants of varied colours and hues, never seen before. Behind them were numerous trees of various kinds Many of them were adorned with lovely, glistening blossoms while many were of lustrous colours

Beyond them, very very far, there was a vast open space in the midst of which shone an exquisite, radiant and magnificent throne of superb workmanship and golden glow.

My eyes turned again to the throne and I saw that the golden light was continuously emanating from it. It seemed that the Mother was seated there in her golden translucent body. Again it appeared that Sri Aurobindo was there. In between, time and again was seen an incredible vision of the two in one body. It seemed to be a transparent body but I could not comprehend how it was inside ..

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo, two together in one body, were seen in front of each and everyone at the same time, in a benediction pose, with their right hand showering grace and love. What an indescribable scene of wonder and beatitude! Everything became quiet and peaceful. Suddenly an ear-piercing resounding victory conch was heard. Simultaneously the children were seen wonder-struck as their physical bodies were slowly and gradually undergoing change and they became youthful. The young people turned strong and well-built while the aged were transformed into the prime of youth. The animals and birds were released from their genetic lineage and were seen in different beautiful forms. Now it started drizzling and then pouring. The novelty of the phenomenon was that it rained in many different colours and finally in silver and gold. Eventually the rain stopped and nothing but the golden light was visible everywhere.

All of a sudden my glance fell on the upper portion of Matrimandir and I beheld a blazing, glorious, ravishing and golden sun covering the entire firmament! Instead of heat, it effused golden light and delightful coldness. My gaze went back to the throne and I saw everyone (men, women, children, birds, animals) standing in adoration in a posture of *Namaskar* (folded hands in obeisance). It was a peerless spectacle. Everything appeared to be golden. Instantaneously, a cascade of golden light from the sky poured into Matrimandir. At this time I sensed that a number of persons were sitting nearby but I could not see them clearly. I had a feeling that the golden light fell on all and penetrated inside. The whole hall was suffused with golden light. Now one could not see anything except the golden light. Suddenly Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's hands of blessing were seen caressing not only my head but everyone's. Everything became peaceful. Once again a sweet melody was heard. My eyes opened. It is just impossible to formulate in words the impact of this moment on my body ..

Now I would like to speak about the Divine Mother, in whose supramental vision the entire inner Chamber was revealed in the minutest detail. She called together some of her devotees from the West and asked them to execute her vision on the material plane. Long discussions with them followed, and at last the entire plan was finalised. Transcriptions of some of these discussions have

appeared in her Centenary Volume 13 I shall quote a few relevant portions, in which the Mother sets forth her ideas in her own words. They make fascinating reading, particularly in the light of the reality Matrimandir is now becoming

She says:

“For a long time I had been feeling something, then we spoke about it the other day and I saw it... I had seen what should be done I saw clearly—very, very distinctly . that is to say it was like that and it is still like that, it is there (*gesture indicating an eternal place*).. the interior of this place.

“It will be a tower with twelve facets, each facet represents a month of the year, and up above, the roof of the tower will be like this (*gesture indicating a roof which slopes upwards from the sides to the centre*)

“And then, inside there will be twelve columns The wall and then twelve columns And right at the centre, on the floor, there is my symbol, and above it four of Sri Aurobindo’s symbols, joined to form a square, and above that .. a globe If possible, a globe made of transparent material, and with or without light inside, but the sun should strike the globe; and then according to the month, the time, it will be from here, from there, from there (*gesture indicating the movement of the sun*). You understand? There will always be an opening with a ray Not a diffused light: a ray which strikes ..

“And then, there will be no windows or lights inside. It will always be in a kind of clear half-light, day and night—by day with sun, by night with artificial light. And on the floor, nothing just a floor like this one (*in Mother’s room*) That is to say, first wood (wood or something else), then a sort of rubber foam, thick, very soft, and then a carpet A carpet everywhere, everywhere except at the centre. And people will be able to sit everywhere And the twelve columns are for people who need support for their backs!

“And then, people will not come for a regular meditation it will be a place for concentration. There will be a time in the week or a time in the day when visitors will be allowed to come, but anyway, no mixture.

“So I think that is good It was there (*gesture upward*). I still see it when I speak of it—I see As I see it, it is very beautiful, it is really very beautiful a sort of half-light one can see, but is *very* tranquil And then, very clear and very bright rays of light (the spotlight, the artificial light, must be rather golden, it must not be cold—that will depend on the spotlight) onto the symbol. A globe made of a plastic material or . crystal perhaps

“After we decided to build this temple, I saw it, I saw it from the

inside .. I did not see the outside. I did not see it at all, I saw only the inside.

“And the important thing is this, the play of the sun on the centre. Because that becomes the symbol—the symbol of the future realisation.

“You see, this is what I have learned: the failure of religions. It is because they were divided. They wanted people to be religious to the exclusion of the other religions, and every branch of knowledge has been a failure because they were exclusive; and man has been a failure because he was exclusive. And what the new consciousness wants (it is on this that it insists) is: no more divisions. To be able to understand the spiritual extreme, the material extreme, and to find . . . to find the meeting-point, the point where . . . that becomes a real force.”

One question asked was whether disciples from the Ashram should work on the Matrimandir with the Aurovilians, the Mother answered:

“It is not possible. All the people of the Ashram who are of working age are all working, they have all got their work.”

When the questioner insisted, “... without the inner force of the people of the Ashram mingling with the Aurovilians, the people from Auroville will remain what they are... Otherwise there is no hope,” She replied:

“Oh no! He does not know. It is all in the mind, it is all mental. Who knows? It is only when one sees. Not one of them sees. All thoughts, thoughts, thoughts. Thoughts do not build.

“You know, I do not believe in external decisions. I simply believe in one thing only, the force of Consciousness which is making a pressure like that (*crushing gesture*). And the pressure goes on increasing which means that it will sift out the people. I believe only in that—the pressure of Consciousness. All the rest are things that men do. They do them more or less well, and then it lives, and then it dies, and then it changes, and then it gets distorted, and then . . . everything they have done. It is not worth the trouble. The power of execution must come from above, like that, imperative (*gesture of descent*)! And for that, this (*Mother points to her forehead*), this must keep quiet.”

The world has been presented with two divine epics. one is Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, which is already in our midst. the other is the Mother's epic still under construction, the Matrimandir. The first has a body of sound, the other a body of sight and silence. both are unique and mantric in character, unconceived by any human brain.

The world is racked with violence. life has lost its sanctity, a dark Power has

eclipsed the light of faith, truth and love At this critical juncture, the Matrimandir is rising like a tower of peace and harmony, and its completion will establish the Golden Era

NIRODBARAN

(Courtesy *Auroville Today*, August 1992, pp 5-6)

ON VAN GOGH

(After Seeing the Film on His Life)

A STREAK of inward vision beckoning bright
 Snaps the hostile hold of a pervasive sombre night,
 A faith turning to the Ail in nature and life's breath
 From a hollow faith's tradition with God in hiding,
 Thy heart valiant with stubborn striding,
 Careless of the persistent hazard of death
 From cold and hunger and human apathy—
 Moved a rebellion—joyous, free..

Not a trudging on the desert-years of life's monotone
 But the blaze meteoric of the expression lone
 Of things felt and lived around
 Unbarriered, short-lived yet profound—
 The soul's brush dazzling on the canvas bold
 Reveals the visages of enchanting beauty untold
 In colours vigorous and ardent to enthrall—
 This is for posterity thy creation's call

SATADAL

SOME EPISODES FROM THE LIFE OF “AN EXTRAORDINARY GIRL”

A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION

(Continued from the issue of 24 November 1992)

My Elder Uncle

LAST time I spoke about the death of my mother after a long history of suffering. I thought her soul would now have peace and I would also feel relieved. At one time I wished that I should die before her because I could not bear the sight of the great suffering she was passing through and my trouble was beyond endurance. So I prayed fervently for it. Then suddenly a figure appeared before me and asked me, “Do you seriously want to die? I can fulfil your wish.” I was at once struck with fear and cried out, “No, no, I don’t want to die.”

Now, the day after my mother’s death, when I was sleeping at night, somebody seemed to wake me up. I looked at my mother’s cot. A dim lamp was alight. I saw there only the upper part of her body very clearly. It was the figure of her diseased condition. She was looking intently at her cot. I sat up and tried to call her, but not a word could I utter as if my voice was choked. Then her figure disappeared but the spirit began to move about. There was no body, only a shadow-like something was walking and my eyes began to follow her. Seized with a sudden terrible fear, I jumped out of my bed and escaped to my son’s room and lay down by his side. But what if she appeared again the next day?—I thought. My only refuge was the Divine to whom I prayed. He answered my call. I saw a golden hand appear and drive away the spirit for good.

Now I shall start a new chapter of my life. A strange man appeared as if from nowhere and became an integral part of my lonely world. My mother having gone, my son an inexperienced teenager, myself unpractical in worldly affairs, there was no human soul to stand by me. This stranger by no means much of a wise practical man, was, by just being a mere man, one whom I could trust entirely and who would obey all my demands. I used to call him my eldest uncle, বড় জ্যাঠামশাই, as we say in Bengali. I have already referred to him in one of my episodes. He had fallen seriously ill and when nothing but a very drastic operation could have saved his life, my fervent prayer to Sri Aurobindo day and night for weeks saved him. That is the man without whose help I, with the problems of a vast property that fell upon my weak shoulders, would have been utterly lost.

When I was living in solitude, shutting myself up I came to be acquainted with his family. His father was a friend of my uncle. They used to study together in Calcutta Presidency College. He became a professor at a College in Poona where again he met my uncle. He said to him, “We are going to Calcutta where

you have many relatives We can meet them ” He replied, “It’s true that I have plenty of them But you had better meet my sister and niece ” In consequence they came to our house I was at that time observing a strict solitude and seeing no one Somebody knocked at my door Opening the door I saw a number of figures and at once banged the door in their faces Naturally they were very much offended, but my mother called them in and had a very friendly chat with them They went away much pleased I also became friendly with them later on. The professor went back to Poona, and used to meet my uncle now and then. When he died, uncle did not go to see his people though he knew of his death When he was told the news, he said to the news-bringer, “Yes, I know. His spirit came to me and said, ‘Dilip, I have lost the key of my room, I don’t know how to get out of it.’ You go to his place and sing *bhajans* That will help him. I’ll come later on.”

This elder uncle was his son. He is even now my closest friend in Calcutta on whom I had to depend for material help

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

QUANTUM AND THE ENORMOUS CHANGE

(Continued from the issue of December 1992)

The Presentation of the Copernican System

AFTER briefly studying the life of Copernicus in the last section, we said a few words about his major work: *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium*. Although Copernicus split this presentation in six books, we should understand it chiefly as a work with two major approaches. The first book, in sharp contrast to the rest, is written in the form of essays, the essential objective of these being to prepare and influence the contemporary mind for the heliocentric hypothesis. His effort was that it should be viewed with a fair and conscientious eye. The rest of his work is filled with quantitative tables of painstaking astronomical data gathered over centuries, coupled with highly technical mathematics and sets of complicated calculations. He had no illusion that these could be grasped only by a handful of the elite astronomers of the day. It is here that he attempts to prove the heliocentricity of the universe and presents the details, as well as the finer aspects, of his scheme.

In the following few paragraphs we shall broadly cover both the features of the Copernican presentation. They will be exemplified by quoting largely Copernicus's own writings as we have them in his first book. Here we must draw the attention of the reader to two important aspects. The first is that Copernicus was an ardent follower of Pythagoreanism and rigorously subscribed to its views. The second, from the point of view of its acceptability, deals with the delicate issue of the motion of the earth. Making such a radical proposition without being labelled as a heretic involved enormous caution. Copernicus achieved it by tactfully making use of the ancient Greek authority which had an outstanding influence during his time. In the following passages we shall also notice that he took particular care not to offend the ruling authority or let them see disrespect. He opens this first book with a general introduction as to why he has studied astronomy and what position it holds among all works of research. Throughout he is full of respect and gratitude for his "founding fathers . . . who first opened the road of inquiry." After having done so, he moves on to suggest why he is justified in proposing his new theory.

"Among the many and varied literary and artistic studies upon which the natural talent of man is nourished, I think that those above all should be embraced and pursued with the greatest zeal which have to do *with things that are very beautiful and very worthy of knowledge* [Italics our own] Such studies are those which deal with the godlike circular movements of the world, the course of the stars, their magnitudes, distances, risings and settings, and the cause of other

celestial phenomena; and which finally explicate the whole form. For what could be more beautiful than the heavens which contain all beautiful things? Their very names make this clear. Caelum (heavens) by naming that which is beautifully carved; and Mundus (world) purity and elegance. Many philosophers have called the world a visible god on account of its extraordinary excellence.

“... and [Plato] says that if anyone denies that this study is necessary for a man who is going to take up any of the highest branches of learning, then such a person is thinking foolishly; and he [Plato] thinks that it is impossible for anyone to become godlike or be called so who has no knowledge of the sun, moon, and the other stars.

“However, this more divine than human science, which inquires into the highest things, is not lacking in difficulties. And in particular we see that as regards its principles and postulates, which the Greeks call hypotheses, many of those who undertook to deal with them were in accord and hence did not support themselves with the same reasons. In addition, the course of the planets and the revolution of the stars cannot be determined by exact calculations and reduced to perfect knowledge except through the passage of time and with the help of many prior observations, transmitted, so to speak, by the hand of posterity. For even if Claude Ptolemy of Alexandria, who stands far in front of the others on account of his admirable care and industry, with the help of more than forty years of observations brought this art to such a high point that there seemed nothing left which he had not touched upon, nevertheless we see that very many things are not in accord with the movements which should follow from his doctrine but rather with movements which were discovered later and were unknown to him. Whence even Plutarch in speaking of the revolving solar year says, ‘So far the movement of the stars has overcome the ingenuity of the mathematicians’. I confess that I shall expound many things differently from my predecessors, —although with their aid; for it was they who first opened the road of inquiry into these things.”

The chapters that follow this general introduction are a step by step progression towards the presentation of his qualitative concept. Thus, he begins by defining the shape of the universe to be spherical, this is followed by a discussion on the shape of the earth and how water and land make up one spherical body; then he describes the movements of the various celestial bodies. Only after this does he venture into the delicate issue of a moving earth. It is in the fifth chapter—titled “Whether Circular Motion belongs to the earth, and concerning its position”—that we see clearly the implementation of his tactful approach. After having provided scientific reasons for a possibility of the moving-earth system, he makes an appeal to the respected ancient authority to provide support for his ideas. This is what he writes.

“Since it has been shown that Earth is spherical, we now consider whether her motion is conformable to her shape and her position in the Universe

Without these we cannot construct a proper theory of the heavenly phenomena. Now authorities agree that Earth holds firm her place at the center of the Universe, and they regard the contrary as unthinkable, nay, as absurd. Yet if we examine more closely it will be seen that this question is not so settled, and needs wider consideration. Consider first the diurnal rotation [of the Earth]. By it the whole Universe, save Earth alone and its contents, appears to move very swiftly. Yet grant that Earth revolves from West to East, and you will find, if you ponder it, that my conclusion is right. It is the vault of heaven that contains all things, and why should not motion be attributed rather to the contained than to the container, to the located than to the locater? The later view was certainly that of Heraclides and Ecphantus the Pythagorean and Hicetas of Syracuse."

Continues Copernicus, after having discussed the possibility for an Earth revolving round the sun "It is therefore justifiable to hold that the Earth has another motion in addition to the diurnal rotation. That the Earth, besides rotating, wanders with several motions and is indeed a Planet, is a view attributed to Philolaus the Pythagorean, no mean mathematician, and one whom Plato is said to have sought out in Italy."

Once again we notice Copernicus bringing an ancient authority into his discussion. By adding the phrase "one whom Plato is said to have sought out in Italy" Copernicus raises the status of Philolaus and thereby asserts the superiority of the Pythagoreans. And it must be remembered that Copernicus himself was a Pythagorean as is reflected in his sun-centered universe.

After presenting "The Vastness of the heavens compared with the size of the Earth", in the sixth chapter, Copernicus tries to explain in the next "Why the Ancients believed that the Earth is at rest in the middle of the Universe". Here he enumerates the three fundamental arguments held by the Greeks. The first is the doctrine of the heavy and the light, where it is suggested that all heavy objects aggregate to the centre of the universe—the earth, the second is based on Aristotle's concept of simplicity of motion of an object which could be either straight or circular in nature, lastly, he presents Ptolemy's view where it is suggested that objects from a moving earth would be thrown away from it.

In the following chapter Copernicus refutes these arguments and proceeds, without hesitation, towards fulfilling his objective ". They say too that outside the Heavens is no body, no space, nay not even void, in fact absolutely nothing, and therefore no room for the heavens to expand. Yet surely it is strange that something can be held by nothing. Perhaps indeed it will be easier to understand this nothingness outside the Heavens, if we assume them to be infinite, and bounded internally only by their concavity, so that everything, however great, is contained in them, while the heavens remain immovable. Let us then leave to Natural Philosophers the question whether the Universe be finite or no, holding only to this that Earth is finite and spherical. Why then hesitate to grant Earth that power of motion natural to its shape [spherical], rather than suppose a

gliding round of the whole universe, whose limits are unknown and unknowable? And why not grant that the diurnal rotation is only apparent in the Heavens, but real in the Earth? It is but as the saying of Aeneas in Virgil—‘We sail forth from the harbour, and lands and cities retire ’ As the ship floats along the calm, all external things seem to have a motion that is really that of the ship, while those within the ship feel that they and all its contents are at rest ”

Chapter 10 is the most important wherein Copernicus completed the design of the heliocentric system Here we find that he leans on a number of occasions upon arguments which are religious as well as aesthetic in nature

“In the middle of all sits the Sun enthroned In this most beautiful temple could we place this luminary in any better position from which he can illuminate the whole at once? He is rightly called the Lamp, the Mind, the ruler of the universe, Hermes Trismegistus names him the Visible God, Sophocles’s Electra calls him the All-seeing .

“So we find underlying this ordination an admirable symmetry in the Universe, and a clear bond of harmony in the motion and magnitude of the Spheres such as can be discovered in no other wise.”

Finally, Copernicus concludes his argument with this exclamation: “So great is this divine work of the Great and Noble Creator!”

These are some of the important features of this book relevant to our context Not once does Copernicus incorporate professional details and involved mathematics; he uses religious as well as aesthetic arguments on a number of occasions, when he suggests an idea that differs from the existing ones, he invariably leans upon a respected authority such as Plato or Aristotle These features enable us to understand two things Firstly, he does not wish to injure the sentiments of the theological authority, at the same time he chooses to project himself as a non-heretic Then, his whole effort is to influence and prepare the mind of the contemporary world for the heliocentric system However, we should note, it was necessary for him to see that his proposal was not ruled out as absurd.

Let us now quickly recapitulate his heliocentric hypothesis and, to give a more complete picture, indicate some of the features that have not so far been covered In this view, the sun lies in the centre of the universe and the earth is considered to be one of the six planets that orbit it Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, is the new order of the planets, they are, however, still attached—as in the earlier system—to crystal spheres. To account for the daily observed phenomena of the rising and setting of the sun and stars, the earth is said to be rotating on its own axis To explain the daily shift in position of sunrise, and recurrences of seasons this axis is given a tilt of 23 5 (deg.) The Moon has lost its status as a planet and become a satellite of the Earth Beyond the last planet lies the sphere of the fixed stars which stands still and bounds the universe The distance between Saturn and the sphere of the stars is enormous;

rather, Copernicus magnified its size by a thousand times to make it “vastly larger than that of traditional cosmology”

In contrast to the Ptolemaic system we find one important difference that needs to be indicated here. The new system brought in a great lot of simplification on the quantitative level as well. This is strikingly seen in the use of epicycles. Though Copernicus doesn't rule them out altogether, the number has been reduced considerably. Ptolemy employed around 70, which went on growing over the centuries; but in the Copernican system there exist only about a dozen. This resulted in reducing the errors enormously.

At this stage questions of the following nature are bound to be asked. How efficient and successful is really the Copernican view of the planetary system with circular orbits? What drove him to suggest this new system? What kinds of reactions did it provoke in the theological as well as the astronomical circles? These will be picked up and discussed in the next section which is devoted to assessing “the Presentation of the Copernican System” and the revolution it set forth.

(To be continued)

VIKAS DHANDHANIA

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of December 1992)

DURING 1906-1907 there was the usual criticism passed by the Moderate party against the Extremists (or Nationalists) The Moderate leaders pointed out that the Extremists had no constructive ideas and that while they demanded “independence” they had no sanction or “practical programme” to enforce the demand The Moderate leader Motilal Nehru, for example, declared vehemently the Extremists’ postures as being “evolved out of the depth of despair”. In answer to this line of criticism a remarkable series of articles altogether fourteen in number, under the general caption “The New Thought”, were published in the *Bande Mataram* between April 10 and May 2, 1907 defining the Extremists’ position. The opening article in the series was from the pen of Satish Chandra Mukherjee, the renowned Editor of the *Dawn*, the Dawn Society’s Magazine.

This was followed by Sri Aurobindo’s seven articles on “The Doctrine of Passive Resistance” in the period from April 11 to April 23 This series was again followed by another six articles—all from the pen of Sri Aurobindo—under the general caption “New Thought” They all exposed the hollowness of the Moderates’ pretensions to political wisdom and pressed with unanswerable logic the claims of India to freedom. In *The Passive Resistance* series Sri Aurobindo discussed such resistance as an instrument that would help India more than any other means to reach her goal Here a strategy was developed by him which combined all the elements of the struggle such as economic boycott and swadeshi, educational boycott and national arbitration courts, executive boycott, national organisation and social boycott

Drawing a distinction between passive and active resistance, Sri Aurobindo writes: “The essential difference between passive or defensive and active or aggressive resistance is this, that while the method of the aggressive resister is to do something by which he can bring about positive harm to the Government, the method of the passive resister is to abstain from doing something by which he would be helping the Government The object in both cases is the same,—to force the hands of the Government, the line of attack is different The passive method is especially suitable to countries where the Government depends mainly for the continuance of its administration on the voluntary help and acquiescence of the subject people.”¹

Probably the first open call in writing for boycott came from Krishna Kumar in the wake of the scheme of the partition of Bengal. In an editorial published in his weekly paper *Sanjvani* on July 13, 1905, he asked the people to renounce foreign goods as completely as possible under the circumstances. This followed a number of public and private meetings at the Calcutta Town Hall protesting against the partition scheme The boycott was mooted It is significant to note

that though boycott was envisaged as a temporary measure against the Government, it in fact developed into a vital feature of the struggle to throw off entirely the fetters of British rule

Sri Aurobindo soon after that meeting became an ardent advocate of boycott and in his writings we find an incisive theoretical analysis of its importance and also valuable hints regarding its technique. Later, of course, Mahatma Gandhi developed boycott-swadeshi into a potent weapon in the struggle against the British

Sri Aurobindo wrote an introduction to the series *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance* when it was brought out in book-form. "In a series of articles, published... soon after the Calcutta session of the Congress we sought to indicate our view both of the ideal which the Congress had adopted, the ideal of Swaraj or self-Government as it exists in the United Kingdom or the Colonies, and of the possible lines of policy by which that ideal might be attained. There are, we pointed out, only three possible policies. petitioning, an unprecedented way of attempting a nation's liberty, which cannot possibly succeed except under conditions which have not yet existed among human beings, self-development and self-help, and the old orthodox historical method of organised resistance to the existing form of Government. We acknowledge that the policy of self-development which the New Party had forced to the front, was itself a novel departure under the circumstances of modern India. Self-development of an independent nation is one thing, self-development from a state of servitude under an alien and despotic rule without the forcible or peaceful removal of that rule as an indispensable preliminary, is quite another."²

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

REFERENCES

- 1 *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol I, p 101
- 2 *Ibid* p 85

A DEBATE ON THE FUTURE OF SANSKRIT

What is the future of Sanskrit? Can it ever be the national language of India? I have faithfully recorded a discussion on this subject between Raju, an Indian Sanskrit enthusiast, and Bill, a Western linguist with sympathies for Raju's plans, but also some considerable skepticism Whether this debate took place in a big auditorium or a small human mind, should be of no consequence for the validity of the arguments.—Wilfried

Raju: The introduction of Sanskrit as the national language of India is a natural demand. But it cannot be imposed, there should be an aspiration of the people from both the North and the South.

Bill: I am glad you make this statement right at the beginning Both of us feel uneasy if this language question is turned into an emotional political issue We don't want to be drawn into that

So let us discuss some practical implications of your concept I assume you won't persuade an Indian in Calcutta or Madras that his mother tongue is anything else than Bengali or Tamil.

Raju: The regional language will be the mother tongue The national language will be Sanskrit.

Bill: For a Maharashtrian, for instance, this would mean a four-language formula Marathi as the mother tongue Hindi for the movies. Sanskrit as a national language and English for medical studies and international communication That appears to be a little too much for the average citizen

Raju: You are exaggerating For most people it will be a three language formula After all, English will only be required for a small number of people Besides, we know from countries such as Switzerland that it is quite possible to live with three or four languages.

Bill: In Switzerland the situation is somewhat as in India today. If you grow up in Geneva, your mother tongue is French, in Zurich it is Swiss German, in Locarno Italian If a businessman from Geneva goes to Zurich, he won't speak Latin with his partners there Actually, it will often be English It has been found that English can be learnt faster than most other tongues

Raju: Now don't say that Sanskrit is a very difficult language ..

Bill: I was just going to say that and it is true

Raju: We have had some children in our classes who were able to speak Sanskrit after a few days of intensive teaching.

Bill: They must be exceptionally gifted Probably, Bengali is their mother tongue so that they have easy access to the Sanskrit vocabulary I know people in the West who have spent several years learning Sanskrit, and if you ask them to speak a single sentence, they will have to make a big effort.

Raju: These people were simply not trained in speaking the language. They

have spent all their time translating from Sanskrit into whatever Western tongue.

Bill I knew we would discuss this point. So I have brought a quotation from Vivekananda's works While speaking about the need to bring out the valuable knowledge and spirituality stored in Sanskrit literature, he said:

“I want to bring out these ideas and let them be the common property of all, of every man in India, whether he knows the Sanskrit language or not. The great difficulty in the way is the Sanskrit language—the glorious language of ours, and this difficulty cannot be removed until—if it is possible—the whole of our nation are good Sanskrit scholars. You will understand the difficulty when I tell you that I have been studying this language all my life, and yet every new book is new to me. How much more difficult would it then be for people who never had time to study the language thoroughly!”*

Bill (*continuing*). Here you can see, Vivekananda openly admits Sanskrit is too difficult for the masses of India But, as a matter of fairness, I should give you the end of this particular passage, since there is something that will please you. So the text continues

“Therefore the ideas must be taught in the language of the people; at the same time, Sanskrit education must go on along with it, because the very sound of Sanskrit gives a prestige and a power and a strength to the race ”

Raju With this whole quotation, you have delivered a blow which does not knock down, it rather uplifts! In fact, the last few lines express a most important truth in the context of our discussion.

Bill. I would rather return to the first part of the text Expecting the whole of India to become Sanskrit scholars means expecting a miracle.

Raju One should never rule out unexpected events I admit though that some sort of miracle would be needed to spread Sanskrit nation-wide on all levels. A whole wave of enthusiasm would have to sweep through the country. And if this enthusiasm and will are there, all obstacles can be overcome Then suddenly all your brilliant arguments don't count any more. As you know, the Israelis decided to make Hebrew their national language and it worked.

Bill Israel is a very small country with a high educational level Besides, the situation there is different, precisely because Hebrew does not have any competitors it is the one and only mother tongue and national language of young Israelis They also know other languages, of course, especially English, or they may speak the language of their immigrant parents at home But basically, the situation is not the same as in India with her many regional languages which have a status of mother tongue for their speakers.

Raju: Even then, we can learn from this example that it is possible to reintroduce an ancient language and fill it with new life. It is a significant parallel that Sanskrit, in the same way as Hebrew, was kept alive by a small community of scholars over the millennia

* *The Complete Works*, Mayavati Memorial Edition, Vol III, p 290

Bill: Do you really believe that Sanskrit in its present form, with eight cases, a dual number* and a lot of grammatical complications will be acceptable to the Indian farmer, tailor or railway clerk? As you know, the general trend of languages is simplification. All modern Indian languages that have evolved out of Sanskritic tongues have removed the complications. In Sanskrit, if you want to say "in the house", you take the word *gṛham* and form the locative. It follows the *a*-declension, so it's *gṛhe*. The word *sabhā* would form *sabhāyām* etc. There are a large number of variations to be learnt for this one case alone.

Hindi speakers have removed the difficulty. They simply take the word *ghar*, *grh* or *bhavan* and add the postposition *mē* *ghar mē*. Certainly, here too we have a few variations, but still it's infinitely easier than in Sanskrit. Likewise, in English you say "in the house". In Latin too there were lots of case endings to be remembered, but people have very much reduced them in Spanish, French, etc. These modern derivatives are invariably easier than their ancestors. In spoken English nobody today would say "thou goest" or "he shineth", although it may still occur in spiritual and religious texts.

Now if Sanskrit goes to the people, they will first throw out the dual number. Next the whole system of declension will be simplified. In fact, unpredictable changes will take place, as happens with every living language and as happened with Sanskrit itself when it developed from Vedic to classical Sanskrit: many old forms were simply dropped.

There is an immense pressure on the brain of modern man to assimilate all the new information coming in through the media in our global village. So he will try to get rid of unnecessary complications in his communication. You can see how in recent decades the Chinese have reformed their difficult script by limiting the number of strokes to be used for a single character.

Raju: I understand what you mean. In effect, you seem to suggest that Sanskrit as a living language on all levels may turn again into some kind of Prakrit and after a thousand years or so we will have a language similar to Sanskritic Hindi, spoken all over India?

Bill: That's my point, exactly.

Raju: Excuse me, if I say so, but you are very much on a mental trip now. Evolution does not repeat itself, it is impossible to make any such generalized predictions. And you know very well that Lithuanian has kept seven cases until today and even a dual number.†

Bill: Well, that's an exception again. In Old Greek the dual was dropped at an early stage, the last few forms are found in Homer's epics. Greek is a very

* Reporter's note. Sanskrit grammar demands that special forms are used whenever *two* persons speak of themselves or are addressed by others. The whole system would be very much simplified if these forms were dropped—a development actually favoured by some activists though entirely rejected by others.

† Reporter's note. Lithuanian is the closest relative of Sanskrit in the West. Although it has been a spoken language all the time, many words of its vocabulary have changed so little over the centuries that even today they can be easily recognized by Sanskritists.

perfect and beautiful language which has given the world magnificent prose, poetry and philosophy. For sure, nobody has ever missed those antique dual forms in classical Greek! Now, let me clarify one point: I wouldn't consider it a tragedy at all, if Sanskrit undergoes some further evolution. I find recitations of poetry in Old Sanskrit/Hindi, for instance, exceedingly beautiful. The full sound value is there.

Raju: I am glad you have had that experience, but I would feel very hesitant about the idea of further evolution of spoken Sanskrit. Perhaps it needs to be considered.

Anyhow, it's a good moment now to end our discussion on a poetic note. I have also brought a text to read out to you, a poem titled "Sanskrit" by K B Sitaramayya, published in 1965 in the journal *Mother India*.

Like Ganga springing forth from Siva's head
 Down on the mighty Himalayan mounts,
 Thence flowing on with a majestic mien
 Enriching the whole earth it cuts across,
 And pouring forth itself into the widths
 Of endless waters mirroring the skies,
 Sacred Sanskrit links the silences
 Of two Infinities with perfect speech.

EXTRACTS FROM THE INDIAN DIARY OF SAUMITRA (DR. WERNER HAUBRICH)

At a time when the SPORHOCHSCHULE, Koln (Cologne), Germany, was the first and only institution teaching the science of sport at university level, Medhananda took the initiative to write to its Director, Professor Diem, who after a short exchange of letters, offered to send one of his students as an instructor of sports to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram—a proposition that the Mother readily accepted. Thus Werner Haubrich arrived, and fulfilled his mission well, lifting the teaching of sport by his numerous lectures and demonstrations to modern scientific levels. The diary of his activities in the Ashram makes an interesting contribution on the subject of combining yoga and sports, and justifies the name the Mother gave him. He also kept his promise to come again, and visited the Sri Aurobindo Ashram early last year with his wife and his younger son. At present he is the Director of the Gymnasium (Higher Secondary School) at Aachen, Germany.

1 September, 1958

[.] I feel a bit depressed. God knows I don't suffer from inferiority complexes, but today I got one

After a wonderful flight I land in Madras. Very warm reception by Medhananda, the Ashram Librarian. He is accompanied by a student. They explained to me that the light athletics season has just ended, and that the gymnastics season is beginning. My heart drops into my boots—gymnastics—just my strong point! In the afternoon when I see the gymnasium and the equipment, I lose heart entirely: it is as in America! A special room with weights, dumbbells, and apparatus for every conceivable muscle-group. Do I have to come to India to find all this? I watch a sports-festival for the youngest children at which much of the Ashram population is present, sitting or standing upon the ground. I am introduced to several people: His Excellency the Principal, Pavitra, the warden of the Playground, Wilfried, a German woman, Subodha: and an Austrian, Josef. Soon I am surrounded by a crowd of boys, and talking with them. They want to know about my achievements in athletics, which seem to impress them—well, that's something at least! They are also impressed that I am so well informed about the world-records and their holders. My question, "Do you play handball?" is answered, "No, that's a game for girls!" So that's no good either! Do I play football? Yes, a little. Basketball? Yes. Volleyball? Yes. When I tell them that their basketball court markings are not quite up to date, they are astonished. Do I play tennis? Yes, but only for pleasure! Inwardly, I draw a deep breath. They drag me to the bodybuilding room. I must give some demonstra-

tions Thank goodness I can manage all these tests I feel like Hamlet, whose problem was also “to be or not to be”!

I have landed in a monastery, founded by the philosopher Sri Aurobindo His successor is The Mother Medhananda has told me that he wants to introduce me to her In the afternoon he picks me up at my hotel. As we near the house where, I am told, a distribution is to take place, I see a long queue of people in Indian clothes. Medhananda and I join ∴, Medhananda in front of me. After a long silence I ask him how I should address the Mother He does not reply. I think he has not understood me and repeat my question. No reply. Instead, a gesture that I should keep silent. He seems to be in a trance. I am rather bewildered. Slowly we move forward, enter the building, mount the stairs, and then in a dark room with a strange smell I see The Mother seated and surrounded by many people sitting on the floor, also in a trance. The Mother gazes at me for a long time, smiles, and hands me a flower I leave the room and the house, not knowing what has happened to me.

In the evening everyone gathers in the Playground, again sitting cross-legged The light goes out, a faint music is heard, and everyone around me meditates. Well, why shouldn't I too think over the day's events? So much has happened to me all at once Medhananda has answered all my many questions so patiently. I need time to get things clear After the meditation the German woman, Subodha, accompanies me to the hotel She tells me about the Ashram She says that the Mother has taken me to her heart—didn't I see how she smiled at me after Tennis this afternoon? Yes, I did see Subodha says I must remember what I dream tonight, and tell her. Well, I hope I dream about Germany or America! I slip under the mosquito net And then—something wonderful. in the house across the way someone is trying to play Mozart's D major sonata. He plays so badly, it's pitiful; but it's Mozart—a piece of home

3 September

I'm beginning to feel better I have digested all the newness a little, and the first successes are coming.

4 September

I feel good! “Again”, I must say During the first couple of days I was really feeling rather lost []

5 September

Everything is just fine again. People often ask me “How are you?” Now again I can quite truthfully reply “I am all right!”

20 October

I am already looking forward to the first Sunday in Germany Here Sundays are

my busiest working days. Today: 6-7 30 practical lesson, 9-10 30 theoretical revision; 3-4 p m. a talk ("Biological Interpretations of Physical Education"), 4-5 individual training for the competition next week; 5-6 30 basketball with the girls; after eating, preparation for the course in long-jump which begins today. No wonder the girls have christened Sunday "Werner's day" Nevertheless I feel fine. It's also interesting that the boys and girls often ask me whether I am happy—it seems I am always singing or whistling a song; they are certainly quite right

"Froh zu sein bedarf es wenig, und wer froh ist, ist ein König."¹ I practised this round with my team for Pranab's birthday. We sing it to him on Sunday morning before the Training. The Mother hears about it and sends me a message that she too would like to hear the round, at the end of the demonstration to be staged in the afternoon in Pranab's honour. Some students ask me to practise another song with them. I am amazed, for within a short time we could sing the beautiful three-part chorus of the song "Gute Nacht, Kameraden, bewahrt euch diesen Tag.."², with about ten people. The Mother is so pleased with these two songs that out of the whole two-hour performance this is the only item which she applauds. And that delights all the performers so much, that they implore me to practise more songs with them. So I will have to arrange another choir lesson. Every morning before the training session we sing a round—"Wachet auf, es krahte der Hahn"³ or "Komm, liebe Sonne, scheine."⁴

It rains constantly for several days before Pranab's birthday. What if the whole performance were to get washed away? I express my doubts to Medhananda. Almost indignantly, he answers, "No, no, tomorrow the sun will shine—the Mother has arranged it." I am knocked flat by this reply.

The next morning at 5, about 50 boys and girls are standing in the Playground, facing eastwards, and reciting a prayer which the Mother has formulated:

O soleil, notre ami!
 Dissous les nuages, absorbe la pluie.
 Nous voulons tes rayons,
 nous voulons ta lumière,
 O soleil, notre ami!⁵

¹ "It doesn't cost much to be happy, and he who is happy's a king."

² "Good night, comrades, always remember this day."

³ "Awake! The cock has crowed."

⁴ "Come, dear Sun, and shine."

⁵ O sun, our friend!

Dissolve the clouds, dry up the rain

We want your rays,

we want your light.

O sun, our friend!

I stand dumb at a distance and don't know what to think. Later on I hear that they spoke the prayer 18 times and 36 times, with five minutes concentration in-between. At first I am irritated, but then I think, really, I have rarely found such faith among Christians. And lo and behold: beautiful sunshine all day, and at 8 o'clock in the evening it begins to rain again. Perhaps faith really can move mountains and drive away clouds

In the morning Pranab's birthday is celebrated in his library. He receives many gifts. That so many people can fit into such a small space! Very varied performances are presented. Indian music on Indian instruments, Indian songs, German songs, German music on a harmonium, Indian and German party games. At my request, in a space of about two square meters a girl student performs some Indian dances—which always delight me. I have never seen anything so lively, harmonious and expressive. And all in a setting of closely-packed boys and girls. Really, a very original and spontaneous birthday celebration!

24 October 1958

I am becoming more and more Indian! Now I have even received an Indian name from the Mother: Saumitra. This word comes from Sanskrit and means "Brotherly friend to all". Last evening the Mother called me to her, to give me the Ashram badge. Every evening I walk across the Playground with several small children holding my hands. People have already suggested that I should simply stay here—they would send for my parents. One thing I must admit: I have seldom experienced such carefree weeks and months as here in the Ashram!

4 December

[...] In Pondicherry the students give me an unforgettable farewell. We have grown very close to one another in the last three months. In the morning all the Group Captains have assembled in the Stadium; they have set up on the track all the apparatus we have used during the three months. On the blackboard are the words "Au revoir. Bon voyage. Bon Retour." They carry me on their shoulders, singing "For he's a jolly good fellow..." In the afternoon the Mother wishes me goodbye. She gives me *The Golden Book of the Mother* and my reference. As I speak my last words to the Mother and the others gather there, the car is already waiting outside. I shall never forget how Mona, with tears in her eyes, stands before me and says, "Auf Wiedersehen". I have rarely been so conscious of the meaning of these words: now we are parting and we hope to see each other again.

With these brief notes I shall close the "Ashram" chapter, for it is clear to me that I have no words to describe all that I have experienced here of human warmth and friendship. And when I say in my farewell speech that it is my deep wish to return to Pondicherry one day, I really mean it.

UNFORGETTABLE

4. SORROW

ON the occasion of Bhai Phonta, Bimal received some precious presents from Didi, his elder sister. Its implication was not clear to him then. But he could guess it, four months later, when Didi got married and went away with her husband. He presumed that those were her departing gifts, in advance, to her dearest brother.

That Didi was so deeply dear to him was not evident before, but was brought home to Bimal only after her departure. Now without Didi everything appeared to him vacant and valueless. While at school the company of his classmates helped him forget her. But at home her absence tormented him immensely. He would feel an acute longing to see her, to converse and be together with her. So he suffered about his Didi for a considerable time.

However, the healing alchemy of time made him overcome this psychological setback in due course. Now he would hardly remember his Didi and he got back to the normal way of life. But after a year and a half, seeing someone resembling her he had a relapse. He felt ill at ease and the memory of her hung on in everything he would do. One day as he returned from the playground his father said, "Bimal, your Didi is very eager to see you. Her brother-in-law Rakhali has come to escort you to her place. So, get ready to start by tomorrow morning."

Bimal and Rakhali found themselves sitting face to face on a gliding steamer. Both of them were calm and quiet. Bimal brooded on Didi—when would he be able to see her, what would be the first conversation? etc. etc. Rakhali kept on watching Bimal without disturbing his trend of thought. Suddenly he broke the silence and said, "Bimal, the steamer-route is very roundabout and we won't reach our destination before tomorrow. If we get down at Madaripur and walk, we may expect to reach my house by this evening. Will you be able to walk for a long time, miles together?" "Of course, why not? I can even run in order to see Didi earlier."

They left the steamer at Madaripur and walked along the highway for a long time. When tired, Bimal exclaimed, "Rakhali-da, how far?" He looked at the position of the sun and replied, "Bimal, let's go now across the cornfields, that will shorten the way a lot." They went accordingly and when the sun was about to set Bimal exclaimed again, panting, "Rakhali-da, how far?" "Just beyond yonder trees. We have almost reached." With the setting of the sun they left the fields and went up to a market-place, then crossing a wooden bridge they walked along the village path with stray trees and jungles on both sides through which the roofs of huts and houses were visible.

Suddenly a big blazing fire in a garden on the road-side attracted Bimal's

attention. He also saw a few shadowy figures doing something with poles in hand. Surprised, Bimal asked, "Rakhal-da, what are they doing there?" In reply Rakhal-da burst into heart-breaking lamentation. Before Bimal could realise the situation, an elderly lady came and led him towards the houses nearby.

Afterwards as Bimal knew that he would see Didi never again in this life, it seemed that a red-hot nail was piercing his heart. Neither his father nor Rakhal-da had divulged to him that his Didi had been seriously ill.

5. HUNTING

It was Sunday. Bimal's father was having a midday doze. He stealthily opened his father's almirah, lifted his gun from there and went out. He had never fired a gun before. But he had learnt the technique of shooting from his father. Bimal had requested his father more than once to allow him to use his gun. But every time he refused, saying, "No, you are too young to fire a gun. Wait till you grow up a little more." But today he saw an alluring chance to disobey him.

On the extreme end of the small pond of Bimal's family house there was a jungle area with sundry plants and trees. In one of the trees a swarm of Harials (a kind of dove-like yellowish birds) thronged to eat its abundant small red fruit. They attracted him to go there with the loaded gun. He went but could not aim at any of the birds as none would sit at one place even for a moment. He searched on and at one point he sighted two birds hanging upside down on a low branch in order to grapple some fruit. He raised the gun, knelt down, aimed and pulled the trigger. "Boom," instantly a sound and a backward thrust made Bimal fall flat on the ground. The gun fell off from his hands, the two birds dropped down, fidgetted for a while and then became motionless.

On hearing the sound Bhuban, the servant rushed to the spot. He pulled up Bimal to his feet, collected the gun and the birds and asked him ironically to follow him homewards, "Come, and have the reward from the master for your excellent performance." By then his father had already got up from his noon-time rest. Bhuban appeared before him like a victorious general with the gun, the birds and Bimal. But he remained silent with a serious look. Bhuban dared not open his mouth. He went away with the birds to arrange for a delicious dish. Bimal waited before his father with lowered head for a while but he uttered not a word. So he moved away to see how Bhuban removed feathers from the birds.

After an hour or so Bimal saw his father cleaning the gun. He neared him as usual to see his work. His father said slowly, "Bimal, it's a criminal offence to use a gun without a licence. You are too young to get a licence. Meanwhile please never do what you have done today. Know this also that after every use the gun should be properly cleaned."

But it was a matter of great regret for Bimal that never again could he get

the chance to use the gun. Because it was confiscated along with the guns of others by the then Government of Bengal for reasons best known to them.

6. TICKETLESS TRAVELLERS

Parbatipur Railway Station of undivided Bengal. On one cloudy evening Bimal, a higher-class student now and his cousin, a bank officer of Bombay, were waiting there for the Darjeeling Mail. They were on their way back to Calcutta after a holiday tour.

The long-awaited train reached the platform at last. There was a tremendous rush inside to allow everybody to enter. The passengers standing in front of the doors blocked the entrance for any new one. Dada said, "Bimal, I must travel by this train anyhow, have no leave and can't spare even a single day." His figure was very thin but he was very smart and agile in his movements. He simply peered through one window (in those days windows had no bars), jumped up and slid himself into the compartment. "Bimal, please hand me my suitcase," he said. That done, he helped Bimal also enter in the same way.

Inside, the passengers standing were more in number than those who were sitting. The dress and appearance of a few sitting ones created doubt in Dada. He demanded to see their tickets which they failed to produce and cast helpless looks at him. He said, "Please get down, otherwise I shall call the police." They were afraid and elbowed their way to get down by the door opposite to the platform. It took a little time and before all could alight the train started. Amidst a hue and cry some men without tickets had to stay inside.

As a result an untoward event took place. At the inner end of two benches about five or six young men were playing cards occupying at least ten persons' place. Suddenly they got furious and came forward with clenched fists to attack Dada. "Who are you Mr. Checker? Who has authorised you to collect tickets, eh? Wait, let us teach you a good lesson."

Bimal sensed serious danger ahead. Dada must be protected at any cost. He was timid and gentle by nature and always tried to avoid quarrels and fighting. But now he did not know how and from where a tremendous strength, courage and energy goaded him. He also went forward to block their attacking mood and movement. With clenched fist and firm voice he warned, "One step forward, I shall change the geography of your face." They stopped and hesitated. Bimal continued, "Are you not ashamed? Who has authorised you to play cards occupying ten persons' place when there is no place for others to stand even?"

As suddenly as they had grown aggressive they became quiet and gentle. "Come, come, please have your seats. There is enough place here, please call your companion." An unexpected and cordial invitation. But Bimal could not find his Dada. After a lot of searching and calling he was found peering from

behind the standing crowd. He neared Bimal with a broad smile and they offered him cigarettes and in no time everything was reconciled. Playing and gossiping went on afresh and none cared to know how the time passed.

Meanwhile a man dressed all in black entered the compartment unnoticed by them. Gradually he approached the card-players and extended his hand asking, "Tickets?"

Bimal and Dada observed with utter surprise that along with the former ticketless travellers the card-players also had to get down from the train. The black-dressed checker led them along the platform just as a cowherd, stick in hand, leads his cows.

(To be continued)

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

SUDDEN TALES THE FOLKS TOLD

46. MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

“How nice it would be if we had a cow of our own!” proposed a husband to his wife

“Fine! That would solve many of our problems,” commended the wife. She added, “If we have a cow of our own, we need not depend on the milkman who adulterates milk with water. Milk from our cow will be fresh and unadulterated. We and our children will be healthier.”

“Our cow’s dung can be flattened and dried for fuel,” said he. “But the only difficulty is to provide food for the cow.”

“Oh! That’s no problem at all,” said she. “I’ll go to the nearby wood every day and fetch grass and leaves for our cow. Don’t I pour the rice-boiled water into the gutter everyday? It will not be wasted hereafter. Our cow can be fed with that too.”

“Well then! If you can look after the cow properly.”

“How many litres of milk will our cow give us?” interrupted the wife.

“It depends,” replied the husband. “It really depends upon the quantity and quality of food you give to the cow. But no healthy cow will give less than four litres a day.”

“Four litres a day!” she exclaimed. “That’s more than sufficient for us.”

“We can sell whatever is surplus for us,” recommended the husband.

“I think we can give one litre of milk a day to my poor brother who has a wife and half-a-dozen children to support,” suggested she.

“What? To your brother! To that useless fellow who always picks a quarrel with me!.. No,” yelled the husband.

“What does it matter if he is not on good terms with you? He is very affectionate towards me. And so he deserves one litre of milk a day from my cow.”

“No! Never will I give him a drop from my cow’s milk.”

“But I am the caretaker of the cow. I’ve every right to give a litre every day to my brother.”

“I’ll never allow it.” His voice was very stern.

“No! Nothing on earth can stop me from giving my brother a litre every day.” She was adamant.

The husband lost his patience, beat his wife and drove her out of the house.

She ran to her brother who lived a stone’s throw from hers. She rehearsed to him amidst tears the evil act of her husband.

The brother listened to his sister’s complaint and laughed over the couple’s foolish act. Yet he decided to teach a lesson to his brother-in-law. On the morning of the next day he stopped his brother-in-law on his way to the field and

began slapping and fisting him. When the latter cried for help, the people gathered and asked him why he was beating his brother-in-law.

"This stupid fellow allowed his cow to wander freely and it entered my garden and destroyed many of my flower plants," complained the brother.

"He then deserves a good thrashing," agreed one in the crowd. "Why did you fail to tether your cow?" asked another.

"Oh! No. I don't have any cow," said the brother-in-law.

"No! You don't have a cow! Why then did you beat my sister and drive her away from your house?" asked the brother feigning anger.

When the crowd demanded an explanation, the husband narrated the entire story. The people in the crowd laughed to their hearts' content.

"You are yet to buy a cow. Even before that you drove your wife away! What a wonder of an ass are you!" pooh-poohed an old lady. "Much ado about nothing," giggled a few old men in the crowd.

The husband understood his mistake and walked towards his brother-in-law's house to beg his wife's pardon.

*

47. A SLAVE TO HABIT

Once a king happened to see a beggar woman and fell in love with her. It was of course love at first sight for she was very charming and well-built. A few days later he made her his wife.

The king was quite happy with his wife. But as days passed, he noticed a dramatic change taking place in her. She was growing lean and haggard-looking. The king who had married her purely for her physical charms felt depressed and consulted many physicians.

The physicians examined her. All of them invariably declared that there was nothing wrong with her body.

"Perhaps she is ill in her mind. No physician will be able to find out what is there in her mind, unless she herself comes forward to reveal it," suggested one of the physicians.

In the privacy of his bedroom, the king asked his wife to throw open her heart to him. The one-time beggar, now the queen, at first hesitated. When the king repeatedly asked her, she said, "Your Majesty! Please allow me to take my food alone and in a closed chamber. Please do not insist that I should dine with you. Everything will be all right then."

The king asked her no further questions, and sanctioned her request.

To the surprise of the king, the queen regained her charm within a couple of weeks. His inquisitive mind was anxious to probe the matter.

One day when the queen entered her private chamber where nobody had

access and bolted the door, the king tip-toed towards the door and watched his wife through the keyhole

The queen poured the sauce and other broiled and fried edibles into the vessel of rice, and mixed it. She then rolled the content of the vessel into several balls and kept one in each corner of the chamber and the rest facing several directions. When the vessel became empty, she carried it like a begging bowl, moved to one corner and cried: "Oh, Mother of this house! Take pity on this poor hungry woman. Give me food."

She then took the ball of sauce-mixed rice from the corner, put it into her begging bowl and began eating from it. As soon as she finished eating it, she moved to the next ball and cried: "Oh, Mother of this house! Long live your children. Let God give you riches. Give me a handful of rice."

She did as before and no sooner did she finish eating it than she moved to the next ball of rice and repeated the process till she ate all the balls and belched.

Spreading the hem of her sari on the floor, and using the upturned vessel as a pillow she went to sleep.

The king, who witnessed the action of his wife in the privacy of her chamber, said to himself: "Once a habit enslaves you, there is no way out," and moved away before his wife could wake up and open the door of her feeding chamber.

*

48. PAYMENT ACCORDING TO THE NATURE OF WORK

A country was once ruled by an unconventional king. Inside his court he was very strict in dealing with matters pertaining to the welfare of his kingdom. But once out of it, he forgot all about his status and moved with everyone in a very friendly way. In fact he didn't distinguish between his minister and the scavenger. He moved with everyone freely for it helped him in many ways to find out the grievances of his people and help them in solving their problems.

Once the king, accompanied by his minister and a woodcutter, took an evening stroll. Since the minister too was very jovial with the woodcutter, the latter heaved a sigh and said, "O king, I sweat in the forest cutting wood from sun-up to sun-down. Yet I am unable to have a sumptuous meal even once a week. I have to be satisfied with a pot of porridge. But look at the minister. I doubt if he ever knows what sweat is. What work does he do except sitting in the court? Yet he has three square meals a day. What sort of justice is this?"

The minister chortled. The king smiled. Patting the woodcutter on his shoulder in a cajoling vein he said, "Everyone gets paid according to the nature of his work. Don't you think that it is perfect justice?"

The woodcutter blinked.

"Well, then!" continued the king. "Don't you understand that brain-work

needs to be paid more than manual work?"

"You are trying to give me some lame excuse, your Majesty!" replied the woodcutter.

Just at that time, the king noticed a bullock-cart pass by. He told the woodcutter: "I'll speak to you later about your problem. But now, go to that cart-driver and make inquiries."

The woodcutter obeyed. Seconds later he came back to inform the king. "It is a bullock-cart, your Majesty!"

"What does it carry?" asked the king.

The woodcutter ran again. He inquired. He came back running and said, "Bags of paddy, your Majesty!"

"How many bags of paddy?"

The woodcutter ran again. He inquired. He came back running. Breathing heavily he said: "Twenty-three bags of paddy, your Majesty!"

"What variety of paddy?"

"Oh! That I didn't ask him. But I'll go and do it. What further information should I gather from him, your Majesty?"

The king with a sway of his head motioned his minister to go and inquire.

The minister clapped his hands hard so as to make the cart-driver hear. When the latter turned back his head to know if he was the one called, the former signalled to him to stop.

The driver stopped his cart. The minister took long strides towards the cart and seconds later came back and said:

"Your Majesty! The cart is pulled by two bullocks. It carries twenty-three bags of paddy—*samba* variety. The driver is himself the owner of the cart and the bullocks. He is a rice-merchant. He has come all the way from Keezhaiyur about 30 miles away from here, to purchase this variety of paddy, which according to him is more in demand there. He is a regular customer to our merchants here. He proposes to come again next week to carry one more cartload of the same variety."

The king motioned the minister to stop and looked at the woodcutter. His meaningful glance made the woodcutter realize to what extent he had not used his brain to extract information.

"The minister certainly deserves more pay than I, your Majesty! A hundred woodcutters can't equal a minister," he said in a humble tone.

*

49. VALUE VARIES

A guru and his disciples moved from village to village preaching the ideals of life and the pathway to God. In certain villages they were overwhelmed by the response from the public. But in many other places they were jeered and booed.

The disciples felt sad whenever they were insulted. It became unbearable to them when in a particular village a few atheists beat them black and blue.

On that night under the motherly care of a pious woman of that village, one among the disciples asked the guru: "Unbelievable are the ways of the world, my Master. We preach only for the welfare of the society. Like beaconlights we show the ignorant masses the various paths through which they can reach God. Yet only a few are able to appreciate our worth. Why should others fail to do so?"

The guru smiled and began narrating a tale.

Once a traveller found a very precious stone on his path. He was extremely happy with his find and wanted to know its value.

He showed it to a green grocer and asked him to estimate its value. "Two brinjals and a potato... Not a pea more," he said.

The traveller then showed it to a rice-merchant and asked him to estimate its worth. "Two measures of rice . . . not a gram more," he said.

The traveller then took the precious stone to a butcher who estimated its worth thus. "A goat-kid . . . not a bone more."

When he showed it to an oil-merchant, the latter said, "Five seers of coconut-oil . . . not a drop more."

Finally the traveller met a jeweller. Showing the precious stone to him he asked "What is the value of this stone?"

The jeweller examined it carefully and said "Oh! This stone is invaluable. But if you are really interested in selling it, I am ready to give you a thousand gold coins."

The guru paused for breath and added "So it is only the jeweller who estimated the real worth of the precious stone, while all others betrayed their poor knowledge about it. The traveller was not unhappy with any one of the merchants he met.. It is enough if we have a few people like the jeweller who know the value of our teachings rather than a crowd who would only underestimate us. Hence let us be happy with the 'jewellers' we come across and ignore the ignoramuses. Let us not waste our time even in talking about them."

*

50. BLOW HOT BLOW COLD

It was midnight when an old man heard someone knocking at his door. "Who is that?" he asked.

"Please open, father. I have come. . . your daughter."

The old man opened the door. But he was taken aback at the sight of his daughter in tears. He hugged her affectionately and took her into the house.

The daughter was shivering all over because of the cold outside and she began to blow air from her mouth against her palms.

"What are you doing, my dear?" asked the old man.

“It’s very cold. My fingers are numb. I am blowing air to warm my fingers,” she answered.

“Oh! You need something hot to drink now. I’ll prepare it,” said the old man and kindled the fire in his oven “Why did you choose this odd hour to visit your father? And why are your cheeks tear-soaked?”

“My husband and I picked a quarrel over something insignificant. A verbal fight ensued. I became cross with my husband and came away,” said the daughter

“Are you sure that the quarrel was over something trivial?” asked the old man stirring the liquid in a pot kept on the oven

“Yes, father! My husband complained of no salt in the dinner ”

“So what! You should have solved the problem by adding the missing matter,” suggested the father

“Yes! But before I could do it, he scolded me for being negligent ”

“But you were negligent, weren’t you?”

“Yes! But before I could apologize for my negligent act, he insulted you for your not bringing me up properly ”

“True! What your husband has said was nothing but truth,” said the old man. “Had I brought you up properly, you would not have been negligent.”

“Oh father! You are acting the advocate for my husband. But I was unable to bear the vulgar comments he passed on you . And that’s why I came away from him,” said the daughter.

“You should not have done so, my child. I’m counting my days. Your husband, I know, is a good man. You should not have left him. Affection and anger are emotions in every man. Where there is affection there is bound to be anger too. I am sure your husband has a lot of affection for you. Have I not chided you myself on several occasions when you went wrong?” So saying the old man poured the hot porridge into a tumbler and gave it to his daughter

“I don’t catch your point,” said the daughter. As the porridge was too hot to eat, she began to blow air from her mouth into the tumbler

“What are you doing, my child?”

“It is very hot. It may scald my tongue. I am blowing air into the tumbler to cool the porridge,” answered she.

The old man smiled and said: “A few minutes ago you said you blew air against your palms to warm up your fingers . Now you say you are blowing air to cool the porridge. If the air from your mouth can blow hot and blow cold, why should not an affectionate husband become angry with his beloved wife?” The old man paused

“How sensible are your words, father!” said she wiping off her tears

By dawn she left her parental home for her conjugal house.

(More Tales to follow)

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The Vedic Epiphany: Volume One – The Vedic Vision by V *Madhusudan Reddy* published by the Institute of Human Study, Sri Aurobindo Darshan 2-2-4/1 University Road, Hyderabad 500044, India. Hard Cover, pp. 414. Price Rs. 500.00

“Natural and supernatural with the self-same ring are wed ” This observation of W.B. Yeats applies wonderfully to the Vedic hymns if we are provided with the key to their esoteric symbolism. Yeats has also made another illuminating observation on the nature of symbols as distinguished from metaphors He points out, “Metaphors are relatively sporadic and accidental images, they become symbols only when they are part of a close and continuous weave ” *The Vedic Epiphany*, bearing on an ancient symbolism, will comprise three volumes of which the present volume “The Vedic Vision” is the first and all the advance news is that we will have two more volumes on the spiritual light enshrined in these earliest revelations.

This massive book by one of the foremost authorities on the ancient Indian culture is a great contribution to the discovery of our most enduring legacy and, though it is no casual read and even long and demanding, it is superbly accessible to all spiritual aspirants

It purports to be “An exposition and celebration of the Inaugural Dawn in the light of Sri Aurobindo” And it is “An advanced dissertation submitted to the University Grants Commission” Presumably the inspiration was provided by the first chapter of Sri Aurobindo’s magnum opus *The Life Divine* entitled “The Human Aspiration” and the later chapter “The Affirmations of Vedanta.” The magnificent hymn to Usha, the spiritual dawn, by Kutsa Angirasa in the Rig Veda forms the epigraph to the chapter The rendering in English was done by Sri Aurobindo himself when *The Arya* was started “What is her scope,” asks the Rishi, “when she harmonises with the dawns that shone out before and those that now must shine?” Kutsa Angirasa himself answers, “She desires the ancient mornings and fulfils their light, projecting forwards her illumination she enters into communion with the rest that are to come ” Could there be a better description of the work undertaken by Sri Aurobindo? He desired the ancient mornings as is evident from his writings on the Veda, the Upanishads and the Gita, but also projected forward his illumination and opened the path for future revelations

In the very first chapter of the *Essays on the Gita* he declared, “We do not belong to the past dawns, but to the noons of the future A mass of new material is flowing into us, we have not only to assimilate the influences of the great theistic religions of India and of the world and a recovered sense of the meaning of Buddhism, but to take full account of the potent though limited revelations of

modern knowledge and seeking, and beyond that, the remote and dateless past which seemed to be dead is returning upon us with an effulgence of many luminous secrets long lost to the consciousness of mankind but now breathing out again from behind the veil ” (Cent. Ed , Vol. 13, p. 8)

“Truth flourishes where the students’ lamp has shone,” wrote the great symbolist poet Yeats. Indeed it is bound to flourish when the student is also an ardent aspirant, and reading through the book before us we are struck by the inspired language of the author and the way he follows his scent with such minute care that it makes the result enthralling.

The cover has a coloured painting of a bearded sage saluting the red mass of a rising sun and one recalls Sri Aurobindo’s lines:

Dawn built her aura of magnificent hues
And buried its seed of grandeur in the hours

The composers of the Vedic hymns were Rishis and the Veda itself describes them as *Kavayah satya śrutah* “seers who are hearers of the Truth” and the Veda itself was called *śruti* that is “revealed word”. Hence it is in the fitness of things that we should have a clear idea of what the word Rishi stands for. Dr Reddy has devoted a long chapter elucidating the different ranks of the Rishis.

There are first the Devarshis who in his words “are eternal beings who have simultaneous awareness of all the worlds and have unhindered access to each of them. They have their abode in *brahmaloka* and do not belong to the human world. Narada is an example of a *devarshi* ” In the second rank are *brahmarshis*. They “are those God-realised souls who utilise their intimate Knowledge and Consciousness of Brahman for the spiritual welfare of humanity. Among these are Vyasa, Vasishta, Valmiki and Vishwamitra.” In the third rank are *rajarshis* who “have a dual, or rather an integral realisation of both the *nirguna* and *saguna* Brahma—the static and dynamic aspects of the Divine. These are the ones who are the conscious instruments and loving channels for the working of the divine consciousness and energy upon the earth. They are close to and conscious of the teleological process of creation and uphold and fulfil the truth of the cosmos. The great king Janaka is a unique example of this rank of Rishis.”

The learned author has rummaged through the whole gamut of the sacred lore of ancient India and traced the development of the concept of Rishi. The Rishis were historical personages who gave shape to the Indian culture but they are also eternal beings who have their permanent abodes in the higher planes and when they descend on earth they bring down the Light and Bliss of those planes in their pristine purity. This leads the author to explore the whole process of creation from Sachchidananda down to the plane of unconscious matter and this process goes back to trillions of years and many cycles, and not to a few thousand years. H.G. Wells in his book *Outline of World History* points out,

“The curtain that hid the unfathomable abyss of stellar distances has been drawn back only in the last three centuries. Still more recent is our realization of the immense duration of our universe in time. Among ancient peoples the Indian philosophers alone seem to have had any perception of the vast ages through which existence has passed. In the European world until little more than a century and a half ago, men’s ideas of time things have lasted were astonishingly brief.” And further on he adds, “It is the science of geology and particularly the science of palaeontology which has broken through this time barrier and opened beyond that little yesterday of scarcely six thousand years a million such yesterdays.” (P. 17)

In piquant contrast to this is what Dr. Reddy brings to light. “According to *Manvantara* tradition each *Manvantara* has a different group of seven Rishis. The *Manvantara* is a duration of time which, as is believed, is presided over by one Manu, one set of seven Rishis, one Indra and one group of *devas*. Each *Manvantara* consists of 71 *Mahayugas*, and each *Mahayuga* consists of 4 Yugas—Satya, Treta, Dwapara and Kali. A total of 14 *Manvantaras* which is equal to 1000 *Mahayugas*, or 4,320,000,000 years of men is the measure of a *Kalpa*, or day of Brahma. At the end of each *Kalpa* there occurs a *Pralaya* or a dissolution of the phenomenal worlds. This is followed by the Night of Brahma (of the same duration as the Day), which again is followed by Day, and so continues the cosmogenic scheme without end. Brahma has a life span of 100 years which is but a ‘flicker of the eye-lids of Vishnu.’”

What is the role of the Rishis in the world? The author has put it succinctly, “It is only to sustain the world and to work for its steady evolution that they take to severe austerities, *tapas* and *yagna*. Their ideal is to ultimately transform the whole of the cosmos into the super-nature and super-consciousness of the Divine.”

“What is the role of these gods in this psychological ascension?” They are, according to the author, “essentially formless and yet take many forms given to them by men. They embody different powers of Aditi. The psychological powers which Mitra, Varuna, Aryaman, Brihaspati, Vishnu and Vayu represent at the cosmic level are respectively, ‘harmony, wideness, power, wisdom, cosmic consciousness and life.’”

And this is his tribute to Sri Aurobindo: “the supramental Avatar has in our own times been the supreme revealer of the secret of the Veda. His Vedic vision and yogic action have not only dynamised the spirit of ancient Vedanta but infinitely widened its scope and mission.”

The most momentous revelation of the Veda is the terse statement, “Their foundations are above”—*upari budhna esām*. From these foundations descend illuminations which make the hymns perennially fresh or as Keats says about poetry

An endless fountain of perennial drink
 Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

These hymns unfold their secret to the initiate who feels the call of the higher planes of consciousness but they are not mere compositions clothed with words, they are charged with the power to break the barriers of mind and life and lead the seeker to that which is above life and mind. As Dr. Reddy points out in the chapter, "Speech, Thought and Experience", "It is the intellectual intent that changes the significance of words, and it is the quality of experience that impregnates them with an effective vibration". Further on he points out, "With the seer, *drastā*, speech becomes symbolic, for he infuses the words with his flaming vision and wealth of inner experience."

Sri Aurobindo in his poem "Musa Spiritus" invokes the Muse of the Spirit thus

O word concealed in the upper fire,
 Thou who hast lingered through centuries,
 Descend from thy rapt white desire
 Plunging through gold eternities

Into the gulfs of our nature leap,
 Voice of the spaces, call of the light!
 Break the seals of matter's sleep,
 Break the trance of the unseen height

This is the potent secret of the *mantra*. It exists in the upper fire. The seer-poet is only the recipient or the *hotā*, one who calls or invokes it to come down. It has a two-pronged action. It breaks the seals of matter's sleep, as well as the "trance of the unseen height". Prof. D. W. Hardinge in his essay "Experience and Symbol in Blake", has made an acute observation and this is the impression we get on a first reading of the hymns, "The themes are brought together, with vistas of association down any of which we can pause and look rather in the manner of a photomontage. They are not fully displayed, not explicitly related to one another but although possibly mystifying at first the effect is of a pattern that has emotional coherence in spite of being so remote from discursive logic." It is here that the student's lamp must shine and make it flourish."

Prof. Hardinge adds, "Nevertheless it must be added that the proper pleasure of the poem is not to be gained by uncomprehending submission to it as a mysteriously stirring incantation, it calls for an accurate grasp of the sense of its statements with the feelings and attitudes they convey, and a developing appreciation involves extended insight into the relatedness of themes that may at first seem to be merely juxtaposed." This work was pioneered by Sri Aurobindo

and it remained his lifelong preoccupation. Five long chapters are devoted by Dr Reddy to the nature and power of human speech. Then there are three chapters elucidating Vedic Symbols and Images.

The word for the practice of Yoga has been rendered by Sri Aurobindo as "pilgrim-sacrifice" as cow has been translated as "ray-cow". Two chapters are devoted to the nature of the pilgrimage. Chapter eleven is entitled, "Vedas: The Odyssey of Earth's Sacrifice" and chapter twelve as "The Quest for Immortality". Three chapters give us a resumé of the various interpretations of the Veda—from Sayana to Dayananda. Dayananda spoke out loud and bold and swept clean the decks of all obscurantism and effete ritualism and founded the Arya Samaj which is still a living and vibrant organization. Thus in a lively canter we are brought to Sri Aurobindo's Secret of the Veda. Chapter Sixteen is entitled "Rebirth of the Vedic Dawn—The Supramental Approach". The Vedic sadhana is a three-pronged assault. Sacrifice and tapas are important but they must be enveloped by a "fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below" and that is the god Agni, the fire stolen from heaven by Prometheus and given to man.

The subject is recondite and it is quite possible after reading the book through, one may blurt out like the scientist Enrico Fermi "Before I came here I did not understand your subject. I still don't understand it but on a higher level." Nevertheless it is bound to imbue in the reader a longing to plunge deeper and deeper into the light, power and bliss of which the work is brimful. I look forward to the other two volumes and hope that the learned author will supply a full glossary of the Sanskrit expressions cited by him.

RAVINDRA KHANNA

*

A New Education for A New Consciousness compiled from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Education, published by the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, printed at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry. Price Rs. 100.00, Pages 230. Available at SABDA.

It is heartening to have before us a marvellous compilation which shows the great self-dedication of the compiler to the projects implementing the methods and teachings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. I hear that the unnamed compiler is no other than Professor Tanmaya (Raymond).

In his introduction he provides in a nutshell the essential drive of the writings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo on Education. To satisfy the long-cherished need of the teachers and the students of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, he has not only done commendable service to the

Institution but also thrown light on the problems of the slumbering world in the field of education and the present life-crisis

That is why he begins with "What extraordinary times we are living in!" He points out that the history of the cycle of man is a progress towards the unveiling of the Godhead in the soul and life of humanity. He asks: "Is there some immense power that is directing the course of events and setting them in their right place?" For Sri Aurobindo the answer is very clear. He affirmed: "There are particular movements in particular epochs, in which the Divine Force manifests itself with a supreme power, shattering all calculations, making a mock of the prudence of the careful statesman and the scheming politician, falsifying the prognostications of the scientific analyser and advancing with a vehemence and velocity which is obviously the manifestation of a higher than human force. These are the times when we say God is in the movement. He is its leader and it must fulfil itself however impossible it may be for man to see the means by which it will succeed."

When the human being faces the evolutionary crisis where he sees no help and no way out of his human dilemma by ordinary means, then he turns to extraordinary possibilities. He turns to the forgotten range of his inner life. Though man represents now the highest form of life on earth, and stands on the highest peak of its evolution, he is not the final upshot of the evolutionary endeavour. As Sri Aurobindo pointed out, "the evolution of life upon earth is clearly an ascending one. This is shown by the increasing complexity of the forms created throughout the ages, forms better and better equipped to express a growing consciousness."

Sri Aurobindo has also said: "The evolution of human mind and life must necessarily lead towards an increasing universality, but on a basis of ego and segmenting and dividing mind this opening to the universe can only create a vast pullulation of unaccorded ideas and impulses, a surge of enormous powers and desires, a chaotic mass of unassimilated and intermixed mental, vital and physical material of a larger existence which, because it is not taken up by a creative harmonising light of the spirit, must welter in a universalised confusion and discord out of which it is impossible to build a greater harmonic life." But to create a "harmonic life" is a vain hope as it is difficult to change human nature. It is an "impossible miracle". But there is a solution for this crisis. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother clearly visualised that only by the direct descent of the Supramental Truth-Consciousness on the earth can the condition of the terrestrial life be transformed and the requisite unity and harmony be established. The compiler writes: "In February 1956, as revealed by the Mother, the evolutionary miracle was effected. For the first time, the transforming power of the supermind manifested itself upon earth." The Mother has observed: "We are at a decisive hour of the earth's history."

Man is the privileged artisan to change his own self, specially the young ones

of the race are more equipped to participate in this challenge to become the pioneers of the new world to come

The Mother has said: "We must throw ourselves boldly on the path of the future despite its new demands". "What we wish to teach, is not a mental ideal, it is a new conception of life and a realisation of consciousness." In the light of this call the book *A New Education for A New Consciousness* has been compiled and brought out "If creative writing is like giving birth to a child, then compilation work is like bringing it up in a proper way which is an arduous task." So remarked Johnson on the day he finished compiling his famous dictionary

In order to accomplish an all-round development of the children of the future and the progressive growth of consciousness on the various levels of the being methodically and integrally, this book offers us VII Chapters with a term-clarifying appendix and some glimpses of the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's lives

The first chapter begins with the method of perfecting the body. The compiler points out. "If the transformation of life upon earth and the perfection of our existence which this implies—is the aim of evolution, then a deep change in the functions of our physical body is required—for obviously this human body, enslaved as it is to the needs and instincts of animality, cannot be the evolutionary summit of physical life. At present one of the most effective means of increasing the receptivity of the cells, is physical culture." The Mother has told us: "Physical culture is the process of infusing consciousness into the cells of the body."

Sri Aurobindo has written: "The perfection of the body, as great a perfection as we can bring about by the means at our disposal, must be the ultimate aim of physical culture. Perfection is the true aim of all culture, the spiritual and psychic, the mental, the vital, and it must be the aim of our physical culture also."

The second chapter deals with the conversion of the vital. The compiler informs us that the education of the vital "should proceed along three main lines: first, the training of the senses, then the development of the artistic faculties, and last and most important the enlightenment of all the inner movements."

The Mother has declared "The indispensable starting-point [for transforming the character] is a detailed and discerning observation of the character to be transformed. In most cases, that itself is a difficult and often a very baffling task. But there is one fact which the old traditions knew and which can serve as the clue in the labyrinth of inner discovery. It is that everyone possesses in a large measure, and the exceptional individual in an increasing degree of precision, two opposite tendencies of character, in almost equal proportions, which are like the light and the shadow of the same thing. Thus someone who has the capacity of being exceptionally generous will suddenly find an obstinate avarice rising up in his nature, the courageous man will be a coward in some part

of his being and the good man will suddenly have wicked impulses. In this way life seems to endow everyone not only with the possibility of expressing an ideal, but also with contrary elements representing in a concrete manner the battle he has to wage and the victory he has to win for the realisation to become possible. Consequently, all life is an education pursued more or less consciously, more or less willingly.”

“How can one transform the vital?

The first step: will. Secondly, sincerity and aspiration. But will and aspiration are almost the same thing, one follows the other. Then, perseverance. Yes, perseverance is necessary in any process...”

The third chapter introduces the true role of the mind. The compiler quotes the Mother’s words in order to explain it. “The true role of the mind is the formation and organisation of action. The mind has a formative and organising power, and it is that which puts the different elements of inspiration in order, for action, for organising action. And if it would only confine itself to that role, receiving inspirations—whether from above or from the mystic centre of the soul—and simply formulating the plan of action—in broad outline or in minute detail, for the smallest things of life or the great terrestrial organisations—it would amply fulfil its function.. .” Sri Aurobindo has said: “Not only Science but Art, not only book-knowledge and information but growth in culture and character are parts of a true education; to help the individual to develop his capacities, to help in the forming of thinkers and creators and men of vision and action of the future, this is a part of its work ”

Chapter IV guides the teachers and shows what they have to contribute in the New Education. The teachers should know that nothing can be taught which is not already concealed as potential knowledge, in the soul. Education literally means to bring forth. Plato also pointed out the same truth when he said that education is remembrance. The task of the teacher is to train the students to develop their self-flowering consciousness.

The awakening of the psychic being is the central object of Education. “The psychic,” wrote Sri Aurobindo, “is the spark of the divine fire...” The Mother has said: “ ..the psychic being in the human being is the manifestation of the spiritual aspiration ” “The psychic being is the representative of the Divine in the human being ”

Chapter VII indicates that “a new world is to come”. According to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the TIME HAS COME, the promise of yesterday has been fulfilled—and “the events we are witnessing today with awe and wonder are only preparing the stage for the next act of the great drama of Evolution.”