

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

SPECIAL ISSUE
24 NOVEMBER 1993

PRICE: Rs. 8.00

NEW RATES

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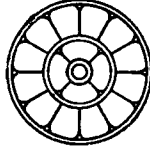
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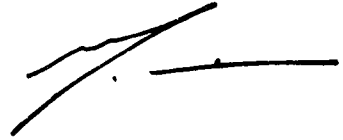


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled



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Editor's Phone 24782

Publishers Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

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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.11

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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LIGHTS FROM THE MOTHER*

(Continued from the issue of October 1993)

If I am faithful to You, the length of the way is not distressing.

If you are integrally faithful, that is to say, if all the parts of your being are united in the same aspiration, then the length of the way diminishes considerably and each step forward becomes a happy discovery.

17 March 1970

I pray that the flame of aspiration may awaken in the parts of my being that are still recalcitrant.

Everything in life is organised to make us go as fast as possible. If our attention is wide awake, we can profit from all circumstances.

19 March 1970

At night there were tiring dreams, but I woke up remembering You and I am fresh.

The nights will be better if before going to sleep, while lying in bed, you offer your body to the Divine with this prayer:

“Lord, let me rest in You.”

25 March 1970

Mother, where is the identification?

Normally the identification is in the psychic being, which consciously forms around the Divine Presence.

But now with the descent of the new consciousness, the Divine Presence can be felt by the cells of the body where It is at work for the transformation of Matter.

27 March 1970

The eagerness for speed and result seems to create tension in my work.

The best attitude for work is to make it an offering to the Divine, and for that, to do it as well as one can, leaving the result to the care of the Divine. Then all tension disappears.

* With acknowledgments to the *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, from the issues of November 1991 to February 1993

And when one knows how to make the offering, the strength needed to carry out the work comes spontaneously, so one avoids getting fatigued.

31 March 1970

Without silence of mind it is really difficult to know the Divine Will.

It is almost impossible, because there is always the risk of taking one's own mental formation for the expression of the divine will.

A great intensity of aspiration can help in obtaining this mental silence (an aspiration that is not formulated in words).

Blessings.

4 April 1970

Now I have a toothache. I regard this as the resistance of old habits.

I know by experience that one can stop a toothache in a few minutes if the *spot that is suffering* invokes the Divine Presence in a total surrender.

But if you have not yet learned to do this in the body, not mentally, it is better to go to Dr. X who will treat you.

Blessings.

18 April 1970

I find that I am no longer trying to know what You want to make of me.

This is an excellent attitude, which proves that you are indeed becoming what I am expecting you to be.

Blessings.

30 April 1970

You are with me always, but I am not aware of it.

I am subtler than the air, and even the air you cannot see.

There are infinitely more things that we do not see than things we see.

2 May 1970

Does the sense of physical suffering no longer exist in the cosmic consciousness?

In the cosmic consciousness it certainly exists.

It is in the Supreme Divine Consciousness that it does not exist; that is to say, the nature of the sensation changes and opposites disappear, to be replaced by something that is indefinable in our language.

20 May 1970

These last three days the idea has been coming that the Matrimandir in Auroville should be constructed soon.

Indeed it would be good, and it would change things in an unexpected way... But this does not seem to have been revealed to others.

24 May 1970

Isn't ordered intuition necessary for being Your true servitor?

Ordered intuition is certainly a very useful instrument for replacing the mind, which has proven itself incapable of correctly expressing the higher consciousness. But beyond intuition, there is a consciousness that reflects even better the Supreme Consciousness.

26 May 1970

It seems to me that an integral love is the first necessity for self-giving to be integral.

From the first contact with the Supreme Lord, one feels inundated and enveloped by a love so marvellous that the response is spontaneous and natural.

1 June 1970

The glimpses of Truth have to be widened and become constant.

It is a sort of atmosphere of Truth in which one can take refuge as soon as one concentrates, until the time comes when one lives there constantly, even while maintaining a surface activity that no longer affects the consciousness.

3 June 1970

For me, physical tamas is very obstinate, especially towards evening.

It may be fatigue, the need for conscious rest or for more sleep, or some element lacking in the diet. This is a subject worth studying.

7 June 1970

How to have a conscious rest?

The body relaxed, lying in bed before sleeping, offering itself to the Divine, and conscious rest comes spontaneously, without making an effort for it. So it is impossible for me to give a method, because none was used. The aspiration of the cells to surrender entirely to the Divine was the only conscious thing.

9 June 1970

I still do not find in myself the reversal of consciousness that is a "revolution of the basic equilibrium", the indispensable starting-point for transformation.

There is no absolute rule. Contact with the inner Divinity can take place in an unexpected way. The important thing is to keep the aspiration.

16 June 1970

How can a sadhak, who has seen neither the goal nor the way, tell whether he is progressing or not?

When one acts, to make an offering of one's action.

When one rests or sleeps, to make an offering of one's body.

And always, at every moment, to make an offering of one's consciousness.

Is it not enough?

Why care about the result? Is it not still the ego?

18 June 1970

To see and feel the Lord everywhere and in everything, isn't union with Him indispensable?

Naturally it is essential and imperative; otherwise one risks becoming the plaything of all kinds of imaginations.

That is why it is preferable to concentrate first on union with the Divine.

The rest follows after.

24 June 1970

Mother has spoken of a kind of radiation that goes out of the body and mixes with others. Is this radiation limited by physical distance?

The extent of the radiation differs with each person and depends on the power of consciousness contained in the cells.

For most people, it is a few centimetres. The radiation of Sri Aurobindo's body extended in a circle more than ten kilometres beyond the town.

26 June 1970

It is said that in the recent earthquake in Peru, eighty thousand people perished. Is it possible that the souls of all those who died decided to leave their bodies at the same time?

In the majority of men, the psychic being is embryonic, not very developed, and does not make decisions.

It is only in a minority of human beings that the psychic being is fully conscious individually and makes individual decisions.

30 June 1970

My vital ego continues to see the faults of others with pleasure.

When it understands that the faults of others increase its own work, the pleasure will disappear.

12 July 1970

To obtain something from men one has to ask, but from You one receives more if one does not ask!

Because usually one is not aware of one's true need and often one asks for useless things. Whereas the divine consciousness always gives exactly what is needed for one's growth and ascent.

24 July 1970

Mother told X that the protection of India lies in the descent of the Force from above.

So, Mother, it all comes back to yoga.

India is the custodian of yogic knowledge, but this knowledge had been veiled by materialism. Sri Aurobindo has awakened it; now it has only to be spread.

30 July 1970

Does the decrease of my impatience mean an increase of faith?

It is undoubtedly the first step towards an enlightened trust in the Divine Wisdom.

11 October 1970

Does fatigue in work indicate a loss of contact with Your Force?

There are several kinds of fatigue. If it is bodily fatigue, it indicates the need for rest.

All the other kinds of fatigue come because you are taking in the forces at the personal source, which is necessarily limited, and you are not connected with the Divine Force, which is necessarily unlimited.

25 October 1970

The mind is learning not to be disturbed by the things it does not like.

This is good. But there is a higher condition to attain. It is to be above like and dislike, understanding the deep law of each thing in order to put each thing in its true place, in one's consciousness and around oneself.

27 October 1970

Does consecration merely change one's attitude towards circumstances or does it change the circumstances themselves?

Consecration completely changes one's attitude and way of acting. This naturally has an influence on circumstances.

29 October 1970

I am trying to renew my self-offering to You.

Yes, it is not an offering that can be made once and for all—it has to be renewed constantly. Then all movements become filled with the Divine.

6 November 1970

The chains of Ignorance are truly strong.

Yes, so strong that only the Supreme Lord can melt them.

That is why, for one who has faith, all is possible.

8 November 1970

To be at Your service—isn't this the only utility of the body?

If not the only one, at least the most effective.

12 November 1970

India's condition is becoming worse and worse, at least in appearance.

The old financial power and the so-called communists are at odds. The time is coming soon for the true Consciousness to intervene and put a little order into this chaos

18 November 1970

What is the right way to rest in order to restore one's energy?

A comfortable physical support (sofa or easy-chair), vital tranquillity, mental silence, and a general attitude in the whole being of passive offering to the Divine.

26 November 1970

What I do one day is no longer satisfying the next

This proves that the urge for progress is very strong. It becomes all-powerful when it is accompanied by the peace of eternity.

2 December 1970

(To be continued)

IDEAS AND IDEALS

PASSAGES FROM SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

Compiler's Note

(While conducting in-house orientation programmes for business executives, the compiler, more often than not, was faced with queries from the participants as to what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had suggested to businessmen and business-managers. The obvious reply at the moment was: 'All Life is Yoga.' To meet with such queries, the compiler produces hereunder some Ideas and Ideals prescribed by Sri Aurobindo and in one place the Mother for business and related problems. At the end of each Idea and Ideal have been inserted references from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother enabling the readers to go deeper into the problems. Captions, however, have been inserted by the compiler himself.—G.P. GUPTA)

Business and Spirituality

I MAY say... that I do not regard business as something evil or tainted, any more than it is so regarded in ancient spiritual India. If I did, I would not be able to receive money from X or from those of our disciples who in Bombay trade with East Africa; nor could we then encourage them to go on with their work but would have to tell them to throw it up and attend to their spiritual progress alone. How are we to reconcile X's seeking after spiritual light and his mill? Ought I not to tell him to leave his mill to itself and to the devil and go into some Ashram to meditate? Even if I myself had had the command to do business as I had the command to do politics I would have done it without the least spiritual or moral compunction. All depends on the spirit in which a thing is done, the principles on which it is built and the use to which it is turned. I have done politics and the most violent kind of revolutionary politics, *ghoram karma*, and I have supported war and sent men to it, even though politics is not always or often a very clean occupation nor can war be called a spiritual line of action. But Krishna calls upon Arjuna to carry on war of the most terrible kind and by his example encourage men to do every kind of human work, *sarvakarmāṇi*. Do you contend that Krishna was an unspiritual man and that his advice to Arjuna was mistaken or wrong in principle? Krishna goes further and declares that a man by doing in the right way and in the right spirit the work dictated to him by his fundamental nature, temperament and capacity and according to his and its dharma can move towards the Divine. He validates the function and dharma of the Vaishya as well as of the Brahmin and Kshatriya. It is in his view quite

possible for a man to do business and make money and earn profits and yet be a spiritual man, practise yoga, have an inner life. The Gita is constantly justifying works as a means of spiritual salvation and enjoining a Yoga of Works as well as of Bhakti and Knowledge. Krishna, however, superimposes a higher law also—that work must be done without desire, without attachment to any fruit or reward, without any egoistic attitude or motive, as an offering or sacrifice to the Divine. This is the traditional Indian attitude towards these things, that all work can be done if it is done according to the dharma and, if it is rightly done, it does not prevent the approach to the Divine or the access to spiritual knowledge and the spiritual life.

There is, of course, also the ascetic idea which is necessary for many and has its place in the spiritual order. I would myself say that no man can be spiritually complete if he cannot live ascetically or follow a life as bare as the barest anchorite's. Obviously, greed for wealth and money-making has to be absent from his nature as much as greed for food or any other greed and all attachment to these things must be renounced from his consciousness. But I do not regard the ascetic way of living as indispensable to spiritual perfection or as identical with it. There is the way of spiritual self-mastery and the way of spiritual self-giving and surrender to the Divine, abandoning ego and desire even in the midst of action or of any kind of work or all kinds of work demanded from us by the Divine. If it were not so, there could not have been great spiritual men like Janaka or Vidura in India and even there would have been no Krishna or else Krishna would have been not the Lord of Brindavan and Mathura and Dwarka or a prince and warrior or the charioteer of Kurukshetra, but only one more great anchorite. The Indian scriptures and Indian tradition, in the Mahabharata and elsewhere, make room both for the spirituality of the renunciation of life and for the spiritual life of action....

(Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 23, pp. 675-676)

*

Black Money and the Divine Cause

Sri Aurobindo has answered this question. He says that money in itself is an impersonal force: the way in which you acquire money concerns you alone personally. It may do you great harm, it may harm others also, but it does not in any way change the nature of the money which is an altogether impersonal force: money has no colour, no taste, no psychological consciousness. It is a force. It is like saying that the air breathed out by a scoundrel is more tainted than that breathed out by an honest man—I don't think so. I think the result is the same. One may for reasons of a practical nature refuse money which has been stolen, but that is for altogether practical reasons, it is not because of divine reasons. This is a purely human idea. One may from a practical point of view say, "Ah!

no, the way in which you have acquired this money is disgusting and so I don't want to offer it to the Divine", because one has a human consciousness. But if you take someone (let us suppose the worst) who has killed and acquired money by the murder; if all of a sudden he is seized by terrible scruples and remorse and tells himself, "I have only one thing to do with this money, give it where it can be utilised for the best, in the most impersonal way", it seems to me that this movement is preferable to utilising it for one's own satisfaction. I said that the reasons which could prevent one from receiving ill-gotten money may be reasons of a purely practical kind, but there may also be more profound reasons, of a (I do not want to say moral but) spiritual nature, from the point of view of tapasya; one may tell somebody, "No, you cannot truly acquire merit with this fortune which you have obtained in such a terrible way; what you can do is to restore it", one may feel that a restitution, for instance, will help to make more progress than simply passing the money on to any work whatever. One may see things in this way—one can't make rules. This is what I never stop telling you: it is impossible to make a rule. In every case it is different. But you must not think that the money is affected; money as a terrestrial force is not affected by the way in which it is obtained, that can in no way affect it. Money remains the same, your note remains the same, your piece of gold remains the same, and as it carries its force, its force remains there. It harms only the person who has done wrong, that is evident. Then the question remains: in what state of mind and for what reasons does your dishonest man want to pass on his money to a work he considers divine? Is it as a measure of safety, through prudence or to lay his heart at rest? Evidently this is not a very good motive and it cannot be encouraged, but if he feels a kind of repentance and regret for what he has done and the feeling that there is but one thing to do and that is precisely to deprive himself of what he has wrongly acquired and utilise it for the general good as much as possible, then there is nothing to say against that. One cannot decide in a general way—it depends upon the instance. Only, if I understand well what you mean, if one knows that a man has acquired money by the most unnamable means, obviously, it would not be good to go and ask him for money for some divine work, because that would be like "rehabilitating" his way of gaining money. One cannot ask, that is not possible. If, spontaneously, for some reason, he gives it, there is no reason to refuse it. But it is quite impossible to go and ask him for it, because it is as though one legitimised his manner of acquiring money. That makes a great difference.

And generally, in these cases, those who go and ask money from rascals use means of intimidation: they frighten them, not physically but about their future life, about what may happen to them, they give them a fright. It is not very nice. These are procedures one ought not to use.

(The Mother's Collected Works, Vol. 4. pp 379-381)

Modern Commercialism

Commercialism is a modern sociological phenomenon; one might almost say, that is the whole phenomenon of modern society. The economic part of life is always important to an organised community and even fundamental; but in former times it was simply the first need, it was not that which occupied the thoughts of men, gave the whole tone to the social life, stood at the head and was clearly recognised as standing at the root of social principles. Ancient man was in the group primarily a political being, in the Aristotelian sense,—as soon as he ceased to be primarily religious,—and to this preoccupation he added, wherever he was sufficiently at ease, the preoccupation of thought, art and culture. The economic impulses of the group were worked out as a mechanical necessity, a strong desire in the vital being rather than a leading thought in the mind. Nor was the society regarded or studied as an economic organism except in a very superficial aspect. The economic man held an honourable, but still a comparatively low position in the society; he was only the third caste or class, the Vaishya. The lead was in the hands of the intellectual and political classes,—the Brahmin, thinker, scholar, philosopher and priest, the Kshatriya, ruler and warrior. It was their thoughts and preoccupations that gave the tone to society, determined its conscious drift and action, coloured most powerfully all its motives. Commercial interests entered into the relations of States and into the motives of war and peace; but they entered as subordinate and secondary predisposing causes of amity or hostility and only rarely and as it were accidentally came to be enumerated among the overt and conscious causes of peace, alliance and strife. The political consciousness, the political motive dominated; increase of wealth was primarily regarded as a means of political power and greatness and opulence of the mobilisable resources of the State rather than as an end in itself or a first consideration.

Everything now is changed. The phenomenon of modern social development is the decline of the Brahmin and Kshatriya, of the Church, the military aristocracy and the aristocracy of letters and culture, and the rise to power or predominance of the commercial and industrial classes, Vaishya and Shudra, Capital and Labour. Together they have swallowed up or cast out their rivals and are now engaged in a fratricidal conflict for sole possession in which the completion of the downward force of social gravitation, the ultimate triumph of Labour and the remodelling of all social conceptions and institutions with Labour as the first, the most dignified term which will give its value to all others seem to be the visible writing of Fate. At present, however, it is the Vaishya who still predominates and his stamp on the world is commercialism, the predominance of the economic man, the universality of the commercial value or the utilitarian and materially efficient and productive value for everything in human life. Even in the outlook on knowledge, thought, science, art, poetry and

religion the economic conception of life overrides all others.

For the modern economic view of life, culture and its products have chiefly a decorative value; they are costly and desirable luxuries, not at all indispensable necessities. Religion is in this view a by-product of the human mind with a very restricted utility—if indeed it is not a waste and a hindrance. Education has a recognised importance but its object and form are no longer so much cultural as scientific, utilitarian and economic, its value the preparation of the efficient individual unit to take his place in the body of the economic organisation. Science is of immense importance not because it discovers the secrets of Nature for the advancement of knowledge, but because it utilises them for the creation of machinery and develops and organises the economic resources of the community. The thought-power of the society, almost its soul-power—if it has any longer so unsubstantial and unproductive a thing as a soul—is not in its religion or its literature, although the former drags on a feeble existence and the latter teems and spawns, but in the daily Press primarily an instrument of commercialism and governed by the political and commercial spirit and not like literature a direct instrument of culture. Politics, government itself are becoming more and more a machinery for the development of an industrialised society, divided between the service of bourgeois capitalism and the office of a half-involuntary channel for the incoming of economic Socialism. Free thought and culture remain on the surface of this great increasing mass of commercialism and influence and modify it, but are themselves more and more influenced, penetrated, coloured, subjugated by the economic, commercial and industrial view of human life.

This great change has affected profoundly the character of international relations in the past and is likely to affect them still more openly and powerfully in the future. For there is no apparent probability of a turn in a new direction in the immediate future. Certain prophetic voices announce indeed the speedy passing of the age of commercialism. But it is not easy to see how this is to come about; certainly, it will not be by a reversion to the predominantly political spirit of the past or the temper and forms of the old aristocratic social type. The sigh of the extreme conservative mind for the golden age of the past, which was not so golden as it appears to an imaginative eye in the distance, is a vain breath blown to the winds by the rush of the car of the Time-Spirit in the extreme velocity of its progress. The end of commercialism can only come about either by some unexpected development of commercialism itself or through a reawakening of spirituality in the race and its coming to its own by the subordination of the political and economic motives of life to the spiritual motive.

(Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 15, pp. 463-66)

True Aristocracy

There is a tendency in modern times to depreciate the value of the beautiful and overstress the value of the useful, a tendency curbed in Europe by the imperious insistence of an age-long tradition of culture and generous training of the aesthetic perceptions; but in India, where we have been cut off by a mercenary and soulless education from all our ancient roots of culture and tradition, it is corrected only by the stress of imagination, emotion and spiritual delicacy, submerged but not yet destroyed in the temperament of the people. The value attached by the ancients to music, art and poetry has become almost unintelligible to an age bent on depriving life of its meaning by turning earth into a sort of glorified ant-heap or beehive and confusing the lowest, though most primary in necessity, of the means of human progress with the aim of this great evolutionary process. The first and lowest necessity of the race is that of self-preservation in the body by a sufficient supply and equable distribution of food, shelter and raiment.... These are the wants of the vital instincts, called in our philosophy the *prāṇakośa*, which go beyond and dominate the mere animal wants, simple, coarse and indiscriminating, shared by us with the lower creation. It is these vital wants, the hunger for wealth, luxury, beautiful women, rich foods and drinks, which disturbed the first low but perfect economy of society and made the institution of private property, with its huge train of evils, inequality, injustice, violence, fraud, civil commotion and hatred, class selfishness, family selfishness, and personal selfishness, an inevitable necessity of human progress ... These disturbances were complicated by the heightening of the primitive animal emotions into more intense and complex forms. Love, hatred, vindictiveness, anger, attachment, jealousy and the host of similar passions, —the *citta* or mind-stuff suffused by the vital wants of the *prāṇa*, that which the Europeans call the heart—ceased to be communal in their application and, as personal wants, clamoured for separate satisfaction. It is for the satisfaction of the vital and emotional needs of humanity that modern nations and societies exist, that commerce grows and Science ministers to human luxury and convenience. But for these new wants, the establishment of private property, first in the clan or family, then in the individual, the institution of slavery and other necessary devices, the modern world would never have come into existence; for the satisfaction of the primary economic wants and bodily necessities would never have carried us beyond the small commune or tribe. But these primary wants and necessities have to be satisfied and satisfied universally, or society becomes diseased and states convulsed with sedition and revolution

. . . The whole of humanity now demands not merely the satisfaction of the body, the *anna*, but the satisfaction also of the *prāṇa* and *citta*, the vital and emotional desires. Wealth, luxury, enjoyment for oneself and those dear to us, participation in the satisfaction of national wealth, pride, lordship, rivalry, war,

alliance, peace, once the privilege of the few, the higher classes, of prince, burgess and noble are now claimed by all humanity. Political, social and economic liberty and equality, two things difficult to harmonise, must now be conceded to all men and harmonised as well as the present development of humanity will allow.

.... The mass of humanity has not risen beyond the bodily needs, the vital desires, the emotions and the current of thought-sensations created by these lower strata. This current of thought-sensations is called in Hindu philosophy the *manas* or mind, it is the highest to which all but a few of the animals can rise, and it is the highest function that the mass of mankind has thoroughly perfected. Beyond the *manas* is the *buddhi*, or thought proper, which, when perfected, is independent of the desires, the claims of the body and the interference of the emotions. But only a minority of men have developed this organ, much less perfected it. Only great thinkers in their hours of thought are able to use this organ independently of the lower strata, and even they are besieged by the latter in their ordinary life and their best thought suffers continually from these lower intrusions. Only developed Yogins have a *visuddha-buddhi*, a thought-organ cleared of the interference of the lower strata by *citta suddhi* or purification of the *citta*, the mind-stuff, from the *prāna* full of animal, vital and emotional disturbances. With most men the *buddhi* is full of *manas* and the *manas* of the lower strata. The majority of mankind do not think, they have only thought-sensations; a large minority think confusedly, mixing up desires, predilections, passions, prejudgements, old associations and prejudices with pure and disinterested thought. Only a few, the rare aristocrats of the earth, can really and truly think. That is now the true aristocracy, not the aristocracy of the body and birth, not the aristocracy of vital superiority, wealth, pride and luxury, not the aristocracy of higher emotions, courage, energy, successful political instinct and the habit of mastery and rule,—though these latter cannot be neglected,—but the aristocracy of knowledge, undisturbed insight and intellectual ability. It emerges, though it has not yet emerged, and in any future arrangement of human society this natural inequality will play an important part.

(*Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 17, pp. 231-34)

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

YOU have asked me: “How to reach my heart-centre? Any practical method for concentration, etc ?”

I have rarely concentrated on any point in the body. There is the advice to concentrate in the middle of the chest or the middle of the brows or on the top of the head. I have known Yogic work carried on inside my head but I have had no awareness of any particular point. In the early days I was told to imagine an open book inside my chest to encourage and promote a heart-opening. But as I wanted to get away from my old bookish life I did not fancy the advice very much. It must be in consideration of that life that the Mother suggested this practice when I, contrary to what may be expected of a supposed intellectual, asked the Mother insistently for a heart-opening. Whatever opening came in the heart was not due to concentrating on that region but due to a worshipful and devotional approach to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in the 6-month period between February 21, 1928 and August 15 in the same year. That something was going on in the heart-region was clear from the fact that every time I sat down to meditate I felt a pain within my chest. I complained to the Mother about this obstruction. She said: “I know what it is. Don’t worry. It will go.” One day, suddenly a wall, as it were, broke down and a clear space was experienced, within which there was an outburst of what I can only call a flaming and flowering ecstasy—an almost unbearable self-existent bliss.

Such a psychic opening in full force is not my constant experience, yet an access to the source of the nectar in some form or other has become possible again and again. Here too there is no specific dwelling on any centre: there is only a sense of turning devotedly towards our Gurus and a call to them to shed their grace once more.

Your second question runs: “If possible attend to the lines on p. 59 of *Savitri* (Birth Centenary Ed.):

A date is fixed in the calendar of the Unknown,
An anniversary of the Birth sublime:
Our soul shall justify its chequered walk,
All will come near that now is naught or far.

What is the significance of fate for us?”

As far as I can see, “the Birth sublime” joins up with the reference to “the Incarnate” in the next few lines:

These calm and distant Might shall act at last.

Immovably ready for their distant task,
 The ever-wise compassionate Brilliances
 Await the sound of the Incarnate's voice
 To leap and bridge the chasms of Ignorance
 And heal the hollow yearning gulfs of Life
 And fill the abyss that is the universe.

Light is thrown on the date in the Unknown's calendar by some phrases on p. 705:

But when the hour of the Divine draws near,
 The Mighty Mother shall take birth in Time...
 The incarnate dual Power shall open God's door,
 Eternal supermind touch earthly Time.

Surely here are prophecies of the Avatarhood of Sri Aurobindo and of his Shakti, his world-manifesting companion, both of them constituting the "incarnate dual Power" by whom the hitherto hidden Supermind becomes a reality in the spatio-temporal terms of our earth.

I don't know what exactly "anniversary" signifies. It should mean some occurrence of either August 15 or February 21 which would mark a decisive point in the history of the Aurobindoman work in the world. What you term "fate for us" is ultimately linked with that "date". (3.6.1993)

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You have spoken of your persistent and obsessive fears. You must imagine a great distance and project yourself there to the call of a vast universal sound. Then all fears and anxieties clinging to you will get thinned out and disappear and at the same time be as if offered to the Divine. In a short while what seems enormously afar will start drawing close to you from all directions and enring you with what I can only term a mighty tenderness of touch. You will feel held in the embrace—at once infinite and intimate—of the Divine Mother. A profound peace which will also be vibrant with a deep quiet love will be your sense of your own true self. You will be free from all fluttering of the small human heart and convey a helpful tranquillity to whoever you meet.

Let me add to this spiritual advice a practical piece of common sense: "Fear never robbed tomorrow of its sorrow. It only robs today of its strength." The Mother once wrote to me that fear, rather than being of any help, tends to attract just the trouble we seek to escape. (7.6.1993)

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As regards the life here, what I have noticed in particular at present is what I may specify as “A Call from Afar.” I hear a faint sound, slightly modulated in its notes, like a wide ring of mysterious enchantment at a great distance which is both of space and of time. There is awakened by it a sense not only reminding me of a question in an early poem of mine—

What visionary urge
Has stolen from horizons watched alone?—

but also bringing to my mind a great phrase from one of Shakespeare’s sonnets:

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

I feel in the life here the promise of a fabulous future on this very earth if we can live at present up to the summons by a vastness of being and a subtlety of spirit waiting to be realised, wanting to be welcomed by the In-dweller and Out-seeker in us who is never satisfied by all that is still left gross and misfeatured around us from a past which has not learned to be completely blessed by Sri Aurobindo, not allowed itself to be entirely caressed by the Divine Mother. When I look at the life within me and at the life without, I am struck by so much that has lingered from my pre-Yogic past in the midst of the thinking and feeling and willing and doing that have known the alchemic touch of the two radiant Presences who have pulled us near them from many a distant darkness. Now there is a distant light that is calling, a circle of glorious days yet to be. When I turn my attention outward I hear the beckoning, at once soft and grand, as if from the ends of the earth. When I turn inward, I discern depth beyond depth crying to me for recognition. It is the same mystic OM inducing us to fulfil it wholly in ourselves, leaving no remnant out—fulfil it in our external existence as well as in our internal being. I am aware of how much I fall short of this Totality, this eternally peaceful, infinitely vibrant Perfection. But as long as I am also aware of its constant “Call from Afar”, there is hope of God’s grace for aspiring me.

(14 6 1993)

*

It is afternoon now—3.17 p.m.—and there is utter quiet in my room as I sit at my typewriter and every now and then look up a little and watch through my window the big bunch of leaves just outside it, either hanging entirely still or very softly moving to the most secret whisper possible of what I may call the dazed air—the air through which the high glow of the sun passes with its full gold to me like a warm blessing from a love intense yet gently modulated to my little human heart. And this heart responds as if in a half-drowse, unquestioning, totally confident that I shall be taken care of to the minutest need of the soul.

The mystic mood is always the same but the mode of its experience varies with the time of the day. In the morning its response is a happy crescendo. A silent self-dedication keeps rising from the eyes as they resume their intimacy with the surrounding scene and then grow into a pair of exploring wings on which the soul lifts itself up into the wide disclosure of the sky through my window. First there is a pale shine, next a faint pink gleam which lays a carpet, as it were, over which a World-Mother's presence sweeps royally towards me to raise me into my highest possibility of inner and outer godhead. My visionary up-soar feels harmonious with what Coleridge in a familiar strain calls the birds' "sweet jargoning" and Meredith in an insightful accent hails as

A voice seraphically free
Of taint of personality.

Going backward, how shall I catch in words the mystic mood at night? It is summed up in that line of Wordsworth:

The silence that is in the starry sky.

There is the feeling of an immense height and this height is seen as communicating with us by means of innumerable vibrating spots of light but everything is filled with an absolute unbreakable silence, at the same time aloof from us and brooding over the little lives that come and go, unlike its own everlasting scintillations. The mystic in me, responding to a distant yet ever-watchful divinity, feels more and more in-drawn as if to get attuned to that godlike farness without by some superhuman farness within until all my heartbeats seem to count the star-thrilled moments of an endless inexpressible Mystery.

Preceding the Yoga of night is the evening's Yoga evoked by the subtle universal Power of which again Wordsworth speaks, the Presence who is interfused with all things but whose interfusion is brought home to us most profoundly by the poet when he particularises it by speaking of the secret Being

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns.

One may ask: "Why did the poet refer to setting and not rising suns when the hidden Power is everywhere?" It must be a deep instinct in Wordsworth that made the choice, for here the passage of light is from splendour into secrecy, the bright visible is the guide to the fathomless invisible which is to Wordsworth the trance-goal of all conscious seeking for the divinity pervading the world of the senses. My Yoga at the time of the day's departure is a kind of meditative suspension between the waking state and a state of drowse. Facing a glory-burst before a final fading away I am apt to experience a vivid summons from the Supreme to feel intensely His presence and then pursue it gradually into a recess of the inmost self while still carrying in my eyes a clinging worship of Sri Aurobindo's resplendence and the Divine Mother's radiance.

Please excuse this prolonged discourse on my own mysticism in relation to the passage of the hours in their daily cycle. I just got swept away by the theme of the afternoon's special effect on the mystic in me fused with the poet.

(4 8 1993)

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Your latest letter has been received. Thanks for the deep love you have for me. I am sure my old heart is sustained from day to day not only by its own urge to love the Divine and the Divine's family but also by the warmth that comes from the Divine's family as well as the Divine's own self.

Last evening a close friend took me by surprise by saying that I am known for the love and peace constantly emanating from my presence. The remark set me looking into myself. Do I really deserve such a compliment? I have spoken of my own urge to love, but I don't remember ever cultivating such an urge, making an ideal of it. If it has come—and come in some abundance if I am to believe my friend—it has arisen from the state of peace to which my whole being has aspired. But how?

I always had some intellectual detachment. In old controversies I recollect having the sense that I could have put my opponent's point of view better than he had done. There was also the sense that he could not be altogether wrong: there must be a modicum of truth in his stand though he had deviated it in the development of his attitude. To give it full play even while convinced that what I had to say had a greater and wider truth: such was my hope when I pitied him for not putting his case as completely as possible. Along with my own conviction went a sympathy with its opposite and a sort of tenderness towards this opposite's mistaken upholder. Thus the heart came secretly into play together with the mind's open confrontation. And they worked in tandem because my controversy, however forceful, arose from a being in me who stood a little away from the surface launching the argumentative attack. The intellectual detachment of that being was a kind of poised peace with a hidden warmth towards all with whom I matched my wits.

When I attempted to practise Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga this special detachment of the intellect began to deepen into an equanimity of the whole nature. The slings of general adverse fortune and the arrows of particular outrages by individuals missed their target. What others might feel as mean acts, movements to hurt or overlook one, produced no effect on me. So there was never any antagonism to anybody. On the contrary there was an endeavour to stand in the shoes of people and extend a friendliness to their troubled minds in order to touch the roots of their cold or angry reactions to me. More than ever before, a calm consideration, a tranquil kindness towards all with whom I came in contact, grew out of my equanimity. When the inmost heart opened to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and began to feel a warm stream of self-giving and a

happy glow of devotion, the distance, the standing back, from the surface consciousness, which equanimity entailed, began to diminish and the hidden presence of the Divine in all came to be caught with a certain vividness which brought a natural insight into their deepest selves and an understanding of the complexes of their personalities. The equanimity now permeated even the outer being and along with it went the touch on others without my getting disturbed, a kind of aerial touch spreading on all sides and carrying an intimacy which at the same time infused peace. Or rather it was the ever-continuing peace which, drawing close to people, passed over them and invisibly caressed them into a condition of echoing peace.

This is how, to the best of my ability, I see myself if I am to accept in any degree my friend's description of me. I must, however, add that there have been persons who have disliked me. It is surely necessary for me to look sharply into myself and honestly decide whether there is a substantial source of deliberate nastiness within me or my critics have a streak of perversity in them. Maybe the truth lies in between. In any case the Aurobindonian equanimity demands that I should look on them with peaceful if not also gentle eyes.

Please forgive me for all this long digression. I have noted all the news conveyed in your letter of 27.6.93. There is nothing foolish in your wanting letters from me. Your eagerness only shows how much you value my words, my regard for you. I am so glad my writings in *Mother India* help to clear away whatever depression comes to you. (6.7.1993)

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You have never been absent from my thoughts. Not only at the Samadhi where you in your wheelchair next to mine are vividly present to my mind, but even at my own flat I often feel you with that brave soft gleam of a smile on your face.

I feel very concerned to read: "Day by day my pains are increasing whereas my tolerance is not able to cope with them." The inconveniences of your life are always before me and I know that you try your utmost to be a true child of our Divine Mother in spite of the obstacles in your way which may tend to bring down the consciousness. Our Gurus are aware of your troubles and the hurdles in the way of your spiritual life: they judge not just by what is actually achieved but by the intention and aspiration behind the thing done, however small may seem the achievement. If the prayer to be a perfect child is intense at the back of all actions, they go by that prayer and understand why the apparent result is sometimes small. Their response is proportional to the ideal sincerely aimed at.

Your dream seems to be located in a mixture of planes—a plane close to the physical at times so that your disability is carried over and a plane more inward where your soul takes charge and its powerful draw towards the Lord is independently active, taking you irresistibly into the aura of the Divine

Presence. On that inward plane you are not a defective body with a struggling soul but a sheer soul with its own subtle responsive body free of all embarrassments of the material life. The dream begins on this plane, then shifts to the other where you need help, but even the help is a sufficient minimum and it can be dropped at the earliest opportunity. From that moment you are soul-powered and your contact with the Lord is so deep and strong and continuous that it overflows into the outer waking consciousness and you had those marvellous five minutes of utter soul-life in the wakeful state on the physical plane just after the dream. What happened is the promise of a more luminous future than ever before. Try to evoke the atmosphere and the feel of those five minutes and even a faint breath of them will serve to carry you across all the obstacles you may have to meet because of your disability.

Your request for something which has been touched by the Mother or Sri Aurobindo is nothing fantastic or whimsical. And if I can find something I shall surely send it. But you must not make a fetish of such things. They shouldn't make you lax about the indispensable inner Presence. Your request makes me recollect an incident connected with Champaklal. A devotee from outside the Ashram once asked him if he could be given something touched by the Mother, which he could keep permanently with himself. Champaklal answered: "What about your own head? Hasn't the Mother touched it and isn't it always with you?" He might have punningly added: "Have you lost your head that you give so much importance to outer reminders of the Divine?"

One point I should like to emphasise. Whenever anything goes wrong with your health, don't neglect it. Ask a doctor to see you as soon as possible.

The prayer you have sent me for August 15 is excellent and should be everybody's prayer:

O Supreme Lord Sri Aurobindo!
 O Unique and Unsurpassable Mother!
 Pranam at Your lotus feet!

Take away, if You like to do so, anything or everything from me but take not or shake not my faith and devotion. I may be a fallen angel but I have fallen at Your Divine Feet. Prick me not further but pick me up and make me live a worthy life, worthy of Your Great Name and the Greatness of Your work.

At this very moment when everything in and around me seems to go from bad to worse, it is then I beg Your Grace and Light to manifest their glory in my whole being!

(10.8.1993)

AMAL KIRAN
 (K.D. SETHNA)

SOME EPISODES FROM THE LIFE OF “AN EXTRAORDINARY GIRL”

A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION

(Continued from the issue of October 1993)

Faith in God

Experiences on the Way

I TOLD the Lord, “You are doing so much for me. At every step I feel your protection, your love and care for me, Lord. I don’t know why you are doing so much for me. I have done nothing for you so far. I have been self-centred, busy with my own thousand problems, major and minor, and complain to you all the while. You are never annoyed but are ever gracious and sweet. What have I done to deserve this bounty? I can only offer my gratitude—”

“Don’t talk of gratitude, forgiveness, etc.—all those human sentiments, high though they are. Be just like a child as you were when you came to the Ashram and used to fall into the Mother’s lap—simple, innocent and beautiful. Questions of gratitude do not behove you. Be that child again.”

My old bone-trouble has reappeared. Sometimes the pain is very acute. Homeopathy helps me; the pain subsides, but for a few days and comes back. My stomach also gives me trouble now and then. I can’t say that I ever enjoy good health. The Guru answered:

“It is because you are not doing any work for the Mother. Those who do her work enjoy good health ”

“But I do a lot of work at home. I have no servant. I mop the floor every day, clean the furniture, wash my own clothes. All these chores take away the entire morning I have to go to the bazar, the bank and what not. I am all alone. I have never been used to this kind of life. You know it very well.”

“It is true indeed. That is why my constant help and protection are with you. Go on in your usual way. One day all these troubles will disappear. But at present you have to be ready to face such minor troubles. Eventually your love for me will conquer everything.”

By the way, I had a very fine experience the other day in Auroville. After your talk to the Aurovilians, which was very good indeed, we went to see the Matrimandir, you remember, don’t you? When we sat down for meditation in the Hall, everything was hushed. When I was meditating I saw a bearded sadhu plunged in deep meditation high above. I was surprised, for in my last visit I did not have any experience at all except that everything was quiet and peaceful. Suddenly the Guru’s voice spoke: “There are seven other such Sadhus

who are constantly on guard and are doing the Mother's work."

No wonder that everything is so well organised and is running so smoothly.

The other day a sadhak called me by name. "You are Esha? We used to see you as a sweet little girl, long ago, walking with the Mother. You used to come to Nirod's room with Jyotirmoyee. What a lovely child you were! I am now reading your reminiscences. Can I come and see you?" I kept quiet. Guru said, "He is a great bhakta of mine. When he comes to see you, pay for his rickshaw fare. He can't walk so far."

To come to our stories:

Last time I told you that I would give some more instances about unaccountable lack of faith in God. This one is about a very intimate friend of mine. She comes from a respectable family, educated, honest, upright, does not tell lies nor does she do any harm to anybody—in short, endowed with many good qualities. Still hers is a life of worries and wants which has made her bitter about God and she has lost faith in him. One day she was going somewhere in a bus, you know those two-storied Calcutta buses crammed with people. While getting out of the bus, the end of her sari got entangled in a wheel and she was dragged along the road. People noticed it and began to shout and scream, "Driver, driver, stop the bus." When the bus finally stopped, her body was seen to have been hurt at many places and was smattered with blood. Part of her sari too had been torn away, exposing her body. A woman rushed to her and covered her with a shawl. She took her home, nursed her and had her sent back to her house.

When I came to know about the accident I went to see her. What a pitiable condition I found her in! I had no words to console her. The same dark question disturbed me, "Why should such an honest person suffer in life while dishonest ones are thriving and enjoying themselves?" How can one keep faith in God if he is there at all? Plenty of people inveigh against him and blame him for their sufferings. I had another relative who also turned against God because he had to face a hard life. Can you give a satisfactory answer?

"All these are foolish questions, blaming God for all our troubles. Poor God, as Mother says, as if he has no other work than causing miseries to people for nothing. When they are happy, fortunate, do they attribute it to God? However, tell me one thing. Is your friend really so honest and faultless?"

"I can't say that. She abuses her husband when she gets into a temper for his faults though he is apparently innocent, just because the husband comes from a poor family and is below her social status."

"Well, you find then a clear answer to your question. If you make others suffer, you have to pay for it. It is a simple rule of common sense. We need not go into philosophic problems to find an answer. Of all faults, bad temper is a grievous one. It makes life unhappy. If you had faith in God, at least you could have found some solace by praying to him, but here you have to blame yourself

and suffer. Where peace is lacking, all kinds of trouble, physical, vital and mental, are bound to occur.”

“Let me give you however one bright instance of her honesty that may compensate for her other faults. My mother had a costly gold watch which she gave to my husband as a present. I wanted to have it in my hands specially because our relation was getting strained. He gave it to me. After a while, our divorce case started and I couldn’t return to him the watch which was due to him. I gave it to my mother for safe custody. She was not keeping well. She locked it in an almirah. One day I opened the almirah to find it missing. As mother was not well we hushed up the matter. Then mother died. I invited that lady friend of mine on the occasion of my mother’s *shrāddha*. She came, expressed regret at mother’s death. While leaving she handed over the missing watch to me saying, ‘Your mother gave it to me to get it repaired. She told me that it was a very costly watch and that I should get it repaired in my presence, but to keep the whole thing secret, even from you. I was so busy that I couldn’t return it sooner. Here is the watch. I feel a great relief to be able to give it to you.’

“I was stunned. A watch worth two to three thousand rupees! She could have easily sold it and received sufficient money to make her life a bit easier. But she stood by her honesty. What a contradiction is man’s life! In spite of so many virtues, one suffers but does not yield to temptation. One can’t be blamed for turning one’s face against God.”

“Yes, because it is easy to do so”, Nirodda replied.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

A THREEFOLD LINE OF SOCIAL PROGRESS

INDIVIDUALISM, SOCIALISM AND ANARCHISM

(Continued from the issue of October 1993)

III. Socialism

SOCIALISM arose through a struggle against capitalism, against the rule of the bourgeois and the plutocrat. Socialism prescribes a kind of society which evidences the fulfilment of the rational order. Sri Aurobindo observes, "Socialism sets out to replace a system of organised economic battle by an organised order and peace. This can no longer be done on the old lines, an artificial or inherited inequality brought about by the denial of equal opportunity and justified by the affirmation of that injustice and its result as an eternal law of society and of Nature."¹³ Individual liberty propagated by individualism could not do away with social injustice and inequality. Therefore socialism had to give up democracy as a principle of individual liberty. It stressed social equality instead of individual liberty. It propagated not only equality of opportunity but also equality of status. This equality is not possible without the abolition of personal property. Hence Socialism went against any kind of personal property. The ownership of property would lie with the community as a whole. To socialism individual being is not an important part in itself of the society and so has to live for the society. Apart from society he has no existence. No individual can determine what is good either for him or for the society. Hence the society would be the real judge in respect of giving any verdict on the good. The ego of the individual would be replaced by the ego of the community and thus a new rational order of society would be established.

But this attitude of socialism has been minimised by democratic socialism. Democratic socialism believes in individual freedom along with collectivism. Thus it combines the two. But this kind of mixture means to go astray from the spirit of socialism. However, it is also true that all is not well with socialism. Many of its verdicts go contrary to human nature. We should not forget that collectivism also suffers from defects. First, collective reason is not always beyond error. If individualism fails to realise real good, the same is true for collectivism also. Secondly, there is no certainty that social good will emerge through the suppression of human free will. It is too much to lay down that the individual has no capacity to discover good even if he is allowed full freedom. Thirdly, to reject freedom for equality is no ideal solution. There is no opposition between freedom and equality. It is only through proper arrangement that both can be harmonised. Lastly, abolition of private property is no guarantee of social upliftment and social justice. One should have property according to one's need. What must be noted is that one should not be given a

chance to acquire property beyond one's necessity. Surplus property should not be owned by any individual. If this is strictly followed inequality will not prevail. So governmental ownership of property is not necessary for the removal of inequality. If unnecessary governmental control is imposed upon individual life, a revolt is sure to take place. So we should be cautious about a rigorous collectivism, otherwise it will have to face the same fate as individualism. Hence Sri Aurobindo says, "...just as the idea of individualistic democracy found itself before long in difficulties on that account because of the disparity between life's facts and the mind's idea, difficulties that have led up to its discredit and approaching overthrow, the idea of collectivist democracy too may well find itself before long in difficulties that must lead to its discredit and eventual replacement by a third stage of the inevitable progression."¹⁴

With the advent of the socialistic idea the State became the ruling power and the State machinery a means of curtailing human freedom. It is conceived that as the individual judgment is subject to error so it should not be given any scope to judge. But it is a misconception that the individual judgment is always erroneous. Again, there is no necessary inverse relation between State control and individual freedom so that we may say that the decrease of individual freedom means the increase of State power. Socialism is based upon this misconception that the State cannot thrive without the suppression of individual liberty.

However, our social history has passed through two phases, one is individualism and the other is socialism. But the present world is on the brink of a crisis: a crisis of ideals. The modern world is not happy with either of these ideals. The efficacy of these ideals is now being questioned. So the time has come to search for a third ideal that can promise a better human world. Sri Aurobindo remarks, "Liberty protected by a State in which all are politically equal, was the idea that individualistic democracy attempted to elaborate. Equality, social and political equality enforced through a perfect and careful order by a State which is the organised will of the whole community, is the idea on which socialistic democracy stakes its future. If that too fails to make good, the rational democratic Idea may fall back upon a third form of society founding an essential rather than formal liberty and equality upon fraternal comradeship in a free community, the ideal of intellectual as of spiritual Anarchism."¹⁵

In fact the claim of equality by socialism is not a new thing, it is individualistic in its origin. It is the individual who has a longing for equality, as for liberty, with others. When a class demands equality, it is members belonging to that class who demand it. They demand equality in respect of political or economic rights, in respect of social status, privileges and opportunities. But this demand for equality may not always be a happy one. "Equality like individualistic liberty may turn out to be not a panacea but an obstacle in the way of the best management and control of life by the collective reason and will of the community."¹⁶

But if liberty and equality fail to square with the spirit of democracy then the only ideal that is left is the ideal of brotherhood or comradeship. And yet comradeship without liberty and equality is quite ineffective. The State becomes all in all and comradeship becomes artificial under the rigorous control of the State. Thus collectivistic comradeship will be completely mechanical. It will fail to attract the communal mind and thus will enter into the region of irrationality. In this respect Sri Aurobindo makes a cautious remark, "If this trend becomes universal, it is the end of the Age of Reason, the suicide or the execution.. of the rational and intellectual expansion of the human mental being. Reason cannot do its work, act or rule if the mind of man is denied freedom to think or freedom to realise its thought by action in life."¹⁷ Dissatisfaction is sure to crop up in men and a cry for freedom will be voiced by them. This newly raised voice will earnestly seek for a new ideal, the ideal of anarchism, which is absolutely different in character from the earlier ideals. Sri Aurobindo says, "Already the pressure of the State organisation on the life of the individual has reached a point at which it is ceasing to be tolerable. If it continues to be what it is now, a government of the life of the individual by the comparatively few and not, as it pretends, by a common will and reason, if, that is to say, it becomes patently undemocratic or remains pseudo-democratic, then it will be this falsity through which anarchistic thought will attack its existence."¹⁸ In fact, even if the Socialistic State becomes democratic in nature the innermost defects of this system would still persist because of its absolute faith in collectivism, "for collectivism pretends to regulate life not only in its few fundamental principles and its main lines,... it aims at a thoroughgoing scientific regulation, and an agreement of the free reasoned will of millions in all the lines and most of the details of life is a contradiction in terms.... For a thoroughgoing scientific regulation of life can only be brought about by a thoroughgoing mechanisation of life. This tendency to mechanisation is the inherent defect of the State idea and its practice."¹⁹

IV. Anarchism

So, as the next emergence of the social ideal the appearance of anarchism is inevitable. The question is: can anarchism offer a better social picture than the collectivistic ideal? We shall seek the answer through a detailed discussion.

The intellectual anarchistic thought revolts against the exaggeration of the collectivistic social ideal. It declares that "all government of man by man by the power of compulsion is an evil,... Even the social principle in itself is questioned and held liable for a sort of fall in man from a natural to an unnatural and artificial principle of living."²⁰ To intellectual anarchism a perfect social State will be that where no evidence of governmental compulsion will be found, rather man will live with others according to his free agreement and co-operation with

them. Now the question is: Will this at all be possible? Anarchism gives a positive answer. Intellectual anarchism depends on two human powers, enlightened reason and human sympathy. Enlightened reason makes a man aware of his own reason and at the same time he becomes conscious of the freedom of others. Freedom is realised as a common element necessary for the perfection of the society as a whole. This leads to evolving a common programme for the upliftment of all, which again creates an atmosphere of natural human sympathy. Not conflict but co-operation becomes the motto of human life. Through co-operation the great principle of fraternity is realised. So Sri Aurobindo says, "A free equality founded upon spontaneous co-operation, not on governmental force and social compulsion, is the highest anarchistic ideal."²¹

This intellectual anarchism would lead either to a free co-operative communism or communalism. In communism the labour and property of all will serve as a means of the good of all; in communalism every individual will live in a society out of his free consent and develop his individuality through an exercise of his freedom. The individual will sacrifice the surplus of his labour for the common good out of a natural co-operative impulse. But both of them suffer from some limitations. The severest school of anarchism finds no favour with communism as it holds that communism cannot be operated in modern life on a large scale. But communalism is also not a healthy alternative. While communism aims at a state of statelessness, communalism prefers free enterprises of individuals. But these expectations may be frustrated because of an absence of any governmental force or social compulsion. And so long as there is a governmental force or social compulsion, a state of statelessness or absolute freedom cannot come into reality. So a contradiction is involved here. Hence intellectual anarchism cannot ensure a healthy solution.

Then for the sake of a better solution we shall have to seek for the ideal of spiritual anarchism. While intellectual anarchism is based upon the enlightened reason, spiritual anarchism is based on the soul, the spiritual principle. Sri Aurobindo remarks, "The solution lies not in the reason but in the soul of man, in its spiritual tendencies. It is a spiritual, an inner freedom that can alone create a perfect human order."²² Now, the freedom desired by a man in fact springs from his soul. Freedom cannot be discovered in a mechanised world. The soul is ever free, its very character is freedom. So, to the extent that we realise our soul, we become free. Realisation of soul as a free reality helps one to establish brotherhood with all. Realisation of soul and practice of love to all are the keynote to formulate universal brotherhood. Sri Aurobindo says, "But this brotherhood and love will not proceed by the vital instincts or the reason where they can be met, baffled or deflected by opposite reasonings and other discordant instincts. Nor will it found itself in the natural heart of man where there are plenty of other passions to combat it. It is in the soul that it must find its roots; the love which is founded upon a deeper truth of our being, the

brotherhood or, let us say... the spiritual comradeship which is the expression of an inner realisation of oneness. For so only can egoism disappear and the true individualism of the unique godhead in each man found itself on the true communism of the equal godhead in the race; for the Spirit, the inmost Self, the universal Godhead in every being is that whose very nature of diverse oneness it is to realise the perfection of its individual life and nature in the existence of all, in the universal life and nature."²³

Hence spiritual anarchism can alone ensure universal brotherhood. Sri Aurobindo visualised the birth of a spiritualised mankind through the emergence of spiritual anarchism. Changes in the modern world indicate that his vision is sure to be materialised. People of the modern world now aspire for a new ideal. Neither individualism nor socialism can help them any more to go beyond frustration. In fact the world experienced these ideals when they were badly needed, the progress of human society would have been retarded but for them. So these ideals appeared to meet the demand of the age. Now that the age is changing its colour very rapidly, to meet the new challenge a new ideal is necessary. Spiritual anarchism would be that ideal. It would take the challenge of the new era and lead humanity to its expected goal. Herein lies the prosperity and progress of modern humanity.*

(Concluded)

USHARANJAN CHAKRABORTY

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* This paper was written when the Soviet Union had still its existence. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the rejection of Communism by the Soviet Union and other European socialist countries by this time point to the fact that the modern world is looking forward for a new ideal. Following Sri Aurobindo's analysis we may say that world events will lead human civilisation towards the ideal of spiritual Anarchism.

AT YOUR BALCONY OF THE UNIVERSE

A POEM BY SUNDARAM*

MOTHER, you wiped the tears of all the weeping worlds.
The wounds of the earth you dressed and healed.
You enlightened man's mind; filled his heart
With Godlike love and divine delight.
And in his individual soul
You installed the Soul Supreme.

The creation you held in the cup of your hands,
And on its innocent, infant head you bestowed
Blessings of the highest nectar-grace.
You flowed in the universe
In sovereign streams of love and joy.
With a wonder-art of myriad lights
You kindled the firmaments to life.

You left? Our eyes may dare to utter so;
But these our drunken cells would only say:
You are here, more present than ever before,
Filling us to the brim, standing over there
At your balcony of the universe.

You came; you went;
You taught the world to move with you.
Come, Mother, come again to earth, to Home
With blessings of the New, the yet Unknown.

22.11.1973

* Translation by Dhanavanti from the original Gujarati

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of October 1993)

THE clash between the Extremists and the Moderates came to a head in the National Congress at the District Conference which was held at Midnapore. So the Nationalists held a separate conference with Sri Aurobindo as the President and they gave a lead to Bengal. Lokamanya Tilak was joyous at this event which gave a warning to the leaders of the Moderates, those who were to attend the Surat Congress. At that Congress Tilak asked Sri Aurobindo to bring as many Nationalist delegates as possible, so that they might form the majority and their demands might not suffer. Sri Aurobindo himself recalled keenly how the Nationalists smarted “under the autocracy of the old workers”.

“It had been decided in the Calcutta Session that the next annual session of the Congress in 1907 would be held at Nagpur. When the preliminary arrangements were being made, there were acute differences between the two parties at the meeting of the Reception Committee over the election of the President. The meeting broke up in confusion and the venue of the Congress was shifted to Surat. It was inevitable that the Extremists would interpret this move as actuated by a desire to facilitate the triumph of the Moderates in the next Congress Session. For Nagpur was a stronghold of the Extremists and the Reception Committee at Surat would presumably be composed largely of Pherozshah Mehta’s followers.”¹ The Moderates held a meeting secretly in the house of Pherozshah Mehta and decided that the Session would be held in the Moderate city Surat. Sri Aurobindo recalls:

“Gujerat was at that time predominantly Moderate, there were very few Nationalists and Surat was a stronghold of Moderatism though afterwards Gujerat became, especially after Gandhi took the lead, one of the most revolutionary of the Provinces. So the Moderate leaders decided to hold the Congress at Surat.”²

Sri Aurobindo has logically analysed the failure of holding the meeting at Nagpur and the cause of disharmony among the two parties of the National Congress. He wrote an article under the title “The Nagpur Affair and True Unity”. He recounts:

“The Nagpur Nationalists are now being run down in every quarter for having failed to work in unison with the Moderates. The cause of rupture as disclosed by the *Indian Social Reformer*, a hostile critic of the Nationalist Party, will convince every right-thinking man that the Nationalists had ample provocation for what is being denounced as a highly reprehensible conduct on their part. They had a Nationalist majority in the Executive Committee and the Moderates were arranging for a fresh meeting of the Reception Committee to alter this state of things. This unconstitutional step led to the subsequent unpleasant develop-

ment. It is very difficult to disentangle the truth from the apparently exaggerated reports of 'Nationalist rowdyism' of which so much has been heard of late. But we have a suspicion that it is the wonted game of the Moderates to have it all their own way and then to try to discredit the opponents by making them responsible to the country for the disunion and dissension in the camp. Why do they not adopt a straightforward course from the very beginning? It is they who stand in the way of a united India by denying a fair representation to those who hold advanced political views. They always want the Nationalists to compromise their principle, by an appeal in the name of unity. But their selfishness and autocracy never allow them to reflect on the true way of achieving unity."³

"It is a fosterer of falsehood and encourages cowardice and insincerity. 'Be your views what they may, suppress them, for they will spoil our unity; swallow your principles, they will spoil our unity; do not battle for what you think to be the right, it will spoil our unity; leave necessary things undone, for the attempt to do them will spoil our unity;' this is the cry. The prevalence of a dead and lifeless unity is the true index of national degradation, quite as much as the prevalence of a living unity is the index of national greatness. So long as India was asleep and only talking in its dreams, a show of unity was possible but the moment it awoke and began to live, this show was bound to be broken. So long as mendicancy was our method and ideal, the show was necessary, for a family of beggars must not vary in its statements or in the nature of its request to the prospective patron; they must cringe and whine in a single key. Under other circumstances, the maintenance of the show becomes of less paramount importance."⁴

The idea of holding the National Congress at Nagpur became impossible and a cause of dissatisfaction, which Sri Aurobindo wrote about in the *Bande Mataram* under the title "The Nagpur Imbroglio":

"A great deal of clamour has been raised by the Moderates of Nagpur and Bombay over the outbursts of excited popular feeling in which a few Loyalists were roughly handled, and use has been freely made of them to obscure the real issue. It is well therefore that this incident, which we must all regret, should be understood in its true light. The Moderate majority on the Nagpur Reception Committee happens to be a factitious majority and most of the members take no sustained interest in the Committee work, while the Nationalist minority are alert and active. At the meeting which elected the Executive Committee the Moderates did not attend except in small numbers and a strong Nationalist majority was elected. The inconveniences of this tactical defeat were very soon felt by the Moderate Party and after a fashion to which they are unfortunately too much addicted, they tried to remedy their original error by riding roughshod over procedure and the unwritten law that guides the conduct of all public bodies. Mr. Chitnavis, one of the Secretaries, called on his own initiative a fresh meeting to elect a new Executive in which the Moderates should predominate. Dr. Munje, also a Secretary, was perfectly within his rights in opposing the bare-

faced illegality of this unconstitutional procedure and refusing to allow the meeting to be held. Meanwhile, great popular excitement had been created and there was a strong feeling of indignation among the students and people in general against the Moderate aristocrats of Nagpur and when they issued from the abortive meeting, they were angrily received by the crowd waiting outside and handled in a very rough and unseemly manner. This was certainly regrettable, but it is absurd to make the Nationalist leaders in Nagpur responsible for the outburst. All that they did was to baffle a very discreditable attempt to defy all constitutional procedure and public decorum in the interests of party-trickery, and in doing so they were entirely right.”⁵

“The most evident sign was the imbroglio at Nagpur between members of the two parties and the subsequent unconstitutional changing of venue spoken of above. After the change, wrote Sri Aurobindo, two choices were open to Nationalists.”⁶

“... It would be the logical course for us... to abstain and allow the loyalists to hold a purely Moderate Congress of their own. The other alternative is to arrange forthwith the organisation of Nationalist propaganda in Gujerat [the region, now a state, in which Surat is located] and make full use of the opportunity such as it is which the session will provide. In either case, a conference of our party is necessary.”⁷

“Later the first of the two alternatives was modified. It was not simply a boycott but a separate Nationalist Congress, to be held at Nagpur, that Sri Aurobindo thought would be preferable. But as much as he was in favour of the Nationalists parting company with the Moderates, he was willing, in this matter at least, to acquiesce in what others proposed. An ‘informal meeting’ of the Bengal Nationalists was held in Calcutta on 11 December... At this meeting, as Hemendra Prasad Ghose records in his diary, it was ‘decided to attend in large numbers’.”⁸ Sri Aurobindo explained why in the next day’s issue of the *Bande Mataram*: “... When Mr. Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai, fresh from his exile, were in favour of attending the Surat session, there could be no further question of our course.”⁹

“On 21 December, 1907 Sjts. Arabindo Ghose and Syam Sunder Chakraborty left for Surat. They had collected about Rs. 360/- for the Nationalist delegates to go to Surat.”¹⁰

Barin Ghose’s account runs:

“With a canvas bag in my hand and a blanket over my shoulder I came to the Howrah Station and was shown by volunteers into a third class compartment in the Congress Special packed full of Congress delegates. Sri Aurobindo and Syam Sunder Chakravarty were sitting smiling in that compartment while J. Ghosal, the Congress Secretary of the moderate party, was travelling in a first class compartment in perfect European clothes and style. The train started in the midst of deafening cries of ‘Bande Mataram’ and the whole thousand-miles route from Kharagpur to Surat was a triumphal journey of lights, crowds, and

continued cheering. The way-side stations even which the special did not touch were lined with admiring crowds and lights flashed and cheer after cheer rose and fell as the train leaping for a time into the lighted yard again rushed into the darkness of the night. We alighted at Amraoti and Nagpur. In both places a sea of heads covered the station and the adjoining grounds, and short halts were made in order to deliver appropriate speeches.

“Aurobindo the new idol of the nation was hardly known then by his face, and at every small and big station a frantic crowd rushed about in the station platform looking for him in the first and second class carriages, while all the time Aurobindo sat unobserved in a third class compartment. By the time this fact became known and he was found out, the train was about to start. In these days of style, luxury and easy leadership, no one could imagine that Aurobindo, nurtured and educated in England and a high official of His Highness the Gaikwad’s service, who could leap into an all-India fame in such a short time—would dream of travelling third class. J. Ghoshal felt small in contrast and tried again and again to invite Aurobindo into his first class carriage and keep him there to save his face.

“This simplicity of Aurobindo was natural and quite unostentatious. All his life he wore nothing but his country-made *dhoti, piran* (Indian shirt) and a *urani* (shawl) with gold threads in its border. Small in stature and slender in build, this quiet unobtrusive man was very often lost in the crowd of his own admirers. When he rose to speak his voice was hardly audible except to those nearest to him—that thin and almost girlish voice which in measured cadence gave vent to truths ringing with strength and beauty. Crowds of thousands materialised as if by magic and were kept spell-bound as it were in a dream by his wonderful personal magnetism.”¹¹

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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THE TRAYAMBAKA MANTRA: ITS MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE

(Continued from the issue of October 1993)

3. The Meaning of the Metaphor

As a metaphor, the word *urvārukam* is employed by the poet with a view to convey a complex idea by means of an image. What then is the idea the poet wants to convey by the metaphor?

Let us see how Sāyaṇa interprets the metaphor. To him it is a cucumber severed from its bond, *bandhanād-urvārukam*. He sees that the cucumber is similar to the poet because both are bound—the former by the stalk (*vṛnta*) and the latter by death (*mṛtyu*). He also sees that the prayer for deliverance from death must be understood on the analogy of severance of the cucumber from the stalk. We shall see how he explains the first part of the prayer. “Do thou deliver me from the cycle of death (*samsārāt*) in the same way as a cucumber is severed from the stalk (*yathā bandhanād-urvārukam... mucyate*)”. But unfortunately for two important reasons this does not help us much in understanding the poet’s prayer. First, Sāyaṇa has not thrown sufficient light on the sense of the metaphor; second, he has not related the metaphor to the poet’s prayer so as to show how exactly the poet wants to be delivered from death.

Why is not the metaphor given the attention it deserves? Is it because the sense of the metaphor is too obvious to demand that attention? If the cucumber is severed invariably by the same cause, then we may assert that the sense of the metaphor is obvious. But this is not the case. As the cucumber is severed differently by different causes—violent or adverse or natural, the sense of the metaphor is known only when the severance of the cucumber is viewed in the light of the most appropriate cause. Therefore there is no valid reason to believe that the sense of the metaphor is obvious and to pay scant attention to it. It is no exaggeration to say that Sāyaṇa’s is an explanation that explains nothing—neither the metaphor nor the poet’s prayer of which the metaphor is an essential part.

As if Sāyaṇa is conscious of this *lacuna*, he makes a suggestion. He tries to explain the metaphor indirectly by suggesting that the aim of the poet is to be delivered from death only through the grace of God, *tvatprasādādeva*.¹ It is putting the cart before the horse. Sāyaṇa has compounded the original difficulty by not showing how his suggestion arises from the sense of the metaphor. The right order of explanation is to move from the metaphor to the poet’s prayer and try to understand the prayer by understanding the metaphor. As long as the

¹ *Rigveda Bhāṣya*, 7-59-12

sense of the metaphor is not carefully explained and related to the poet, the poet's prayer does not make sense.

Apart from this difficulty, Sāyaṇa's construction *bandhanād-urvārukamiva* is based on a wrong perception of the parallelism between the cucumber and the poet. In his view *bandha* and *mṛtyu* are parallel to each other. As we know, the term *bandha* has two distinct senses, a tie or a bond and a fetter or a bondage. As a bond, it is not a parallel to *mṛtyu* (death) which is a fetter and an enslavement very difficult to exceed. As a bondage, it is surely a parallel to *mṛtyu*. By holding *bandha* as a parallel to *mṛtyu* Sāyaṇa insists on the sense of bondage. But at the same time he uses the term *bandha* to signify the bond, namely, the stalk by which the cucumber is tied. He does not realise that *bandha* signifying the stalk cannot be a parallel to *mṛtyu*. "Both bind; therefore both are parallel to each other" is an over-simplification and a blindness to their essential differences. The underlying discord between *bandha* as a bond and *mṛtyu* becomes visible when we notice how the stalk and death are basically apart and opposed. While the stalk supports, nourishes and protects the cucumber, death enslaves the poet and takes away his freedom of natural growth. One is helpful and the other is harmful. Therefore we have to set aside Sāyaṇa's construction and try to understand the prayer as it is where the metaphor is *urvārukam* and not *bandhanād-urvārukam* and the term *bandha* goes naturally with *mṛtyu*, showing how death acts aggressively on the poet, *bandhanān-mṛtyoḥ*.

To turn to Panikkar's interpretation. It is not any better than Sāyaṇa's. He sees the cucumber as a "plucked fruit", a fruit plucked by Death. He says: "Death does not wait for the fruit to fall from the tree by itself through its own impulse." A cucumber plucked by Death is not only dead but put to death by violence. Panikkar himself admits that "the cucumber dies when plucked". The prayer of the poet is to be delivered from Death. He uses the metaphor to unfold the effect of enlarging on the sense of his prayer—to unfold by suggestion the full significance of what he is praying for. If we accept Panikkar's interpretation, the metaphor does not perform the intended function; on the contrary, it destroys the original sense of the poet's prayer. The metaphor, as he explains, signifies a violent removal by Death which is contrary to the sense of the prayer where the poet is asking for the destruction of Death and its hold upon him.

If Sāyaṇa fails to offer a clear explanation of the metaphor and its significance for the poet, Panikkar goes to the other extreme of putting a wrong interpretation on the metaphor and making it most unsuitable for the poet's purpose.

As the poet compares himself to a cucumber, the first suggestion is that the comparison is between two physical entities—the fruit and the poet's body. Second, as the cucumber and the poet's body are both perishable substances, the poet does not aim at removing the death which destroys through the ageing process. Third, his aim is rather to remove another form of death which destroys

through a different process, to which both the cucumber and the poet's body are subject, and from which both can be saved. It is within this framework that we have to study the metaphor and its significance for the poet.

The poet is thinking of a cucumber well taken care of by a gardener. The gardener gives full protection to the cucumber and carefully avoids all adverse circumstances which cause destruction to it. By his unbroken support and nourishment the cucumber is allowed to stay on the plant for the whole time allotted to it and swell into a full-sized ripe fruit. So viewed, the poet is referring to a cucumber saved from destruction caused by adverse circumstances and allowed to enjoy full life and growth under the loving care of a good gardener.

This brings out the intended sense of the poet's prayer as clearly as possible—the sense that he must be separated from unnatural death which operates through adverse circumstances and live to a ripe old age under the benevolent care of God.¹ This not only makes the prayer of the poet intelligible to us but shows very clearly how his aspiration for freedom from unnatural death is consistent with the established attitude of the Aryan poets in general. We have already seen how they are insistent upon living a full life till one reaches old age and not departing from the world before the appointed time.

4. The meaning of Māmṛtāt

The prayer as expressed in the first part of the second line of the Mantra has become clear to us,—the prayer for freedom from unnatural death and living to a ripe old age. Now we shall proceed to the second part of the prayer, *māmṛtāt*. Its interpretation is organically related to the one given to the first part.

Sāyaṇa takes *mṛtyor-mukṣīya* to mean freedom from the cycle of death, *maraṇāt saṃsārādvā mocaya*. Evidently it is a prayer for going beyond the cycle of death and attaining immortality. But this does not agree with the second part of the prayer where the devotee is asking God not to deliver him from immortality, *māmṛtāt mukṣīya*, as if he has already become free from the cycle of death and attained immortality. Further, the second part of the prayer assumes that God is intent upon taking the poet away from immortality. If God is so intent, then why does the poet address his prayer to Him as though He is the deliverer from death? Therefore Sāyaṇa concludes that *māmṛtāt mukṣīya* must be understood as *mām āmṛtāt mocaya* (do thou deliver me till immortality *i.e.* till I realise oneness with immortality). Note that the original terms *mā* and *amṛtāt* have been respectively changed as *mām* and *ā+amṛtāt*.

Though Sāyaṇa's interpretation of *māmṛtāt mukṣīya* is ingenious and grammatically permissible, it is unnatural and unfaithful. Unnatural, because it does violence to the natural sense of the original terms; unfaithful, because it

¹ Cp *Rigveda*, 2-33-2 By the most salutary medicines given by thee, O Rudra, I would attain a hundred winters (*tvādattebhī rudra santamebhuh śatam humā aśīya bheṣajebhuh*).

fails to bring out the true intention of the devotee. Unless we recognise that the term *amṛtāt* refers back to *bandhanāt* in the first part of the prayer and is used as a rhetorical form by the poet with a view to make his prayer complete and persuasive and that the former term should therefore be allowed to remain a single word giving the same ablative sense as the latter without changing it into an *avyayībhāva* compound (*ā+amṛtāt*) and reading into it a different ablative sense, our interpretation of *māmṛtāt* can be neither natural nor faithful.¹ But Sāyana may say that if we allow *amṛtāt* to be a single word like *bandhanāt*, the prayer makes no sense. It is true. It makes no sense, not because the poet is confused in his thinking but because Sāyana has no insight into the words of the Vedic poet and does not follow the sequence in which the latter has arranged his thoughts.

There is also a serious flaw in Sāyana's interpretation. According to him, the poet is asking God to deliver him from the cycle of death till he realises oneness with immortality. It supposes that when one is delivered from the cycle of death, one does not necessarily attain immortality. This is absurd. Since the deliverance itself is immortality, a soul delivered from mortality is necessarily a soul united with immortality.

Now we shall turn to Panikkar. He takes the first part of the prayer as referring to the poet's desire for freedom from the cycle of death that binds the soul. As for the second part, he also sees that it makes no sense as long as *māmṛtāt mukṣīya* is allowed to stand as it is. Hence he takes it as an affirmative idea phrased negatively, an idea arising directly out of the first part of the prayer,—hand me over to Immortality. This too, like Sāyana's, is far from satisfactory. For Panikkar does not explain why the affirmative idea is stated negatively or why it is not stated affirmatively.

As we have already indicated, *māmṛtāt* has been carefully chosen by the poet with a view to produce the best rhetorical effect in relation to the first part of the prayer *mṛtyoḥ bandhanāt mukṣīya*. More important than this is that *māmṛtāt* is intended to eliminate a limitation inherent in the first part of the prayer—the limitation that the poet is concerned with the removal of untimely death alone and does not care to remove the cycle of death that separates his soul from immortality.

Both Sāyana and Panikkar consider *māmṛtāt* unintelligible because both commit the same mistake—they take *mṛtyu* in the prayer to mean not the physical death but the cycle of death that binds the soul.

(To be continued)

N. JAYASHANMUKHAM

¹ Cp Sāyana's reading of *māmṛtāt* in his commentary on the *Taittirīya Samhitā*, 1-8-6-5. Here he reads it as *mā+amṛtāt*.

IS LIFE A PRISON?

Eternity's contact broke the moulds of sense. . .

The imprisoned deity rent its magic fence.
As with a sound of thunder and of seas,
Vast barriers crashed around the huge escape....

Thus came his soul's release from Ignorance.

(*Savitri*, pp. 81-82, 44)

THE ancients in India as well as elsewhere called this bodily existence a prison. ("The prison-house is the world of sight."—Plato.) Modern science explains how it is so.

What is a prison? A confined, walled, small place forbidding any movement out of it, with perhaps a barred window letting in a little sunlight and air and affording the prisoner a small glimpse of the vast outside. Many and of various kinds are the restrictions placed on the prisoner, restrictions as to food, comfort, joy, knowledge, movement, etc.

Now let us consider human life and its knowledge.

For a human being what is generally termed knowledge is the facts or data that his senses bring him plus the interpretation that his mind puts on them. (The word 'mind' is used here in the collective sense in which it is often used, that is inclusive of thoughts, reasonings, instincts, memory, etc.) But the data so brought in are so limited, so meagre and so deceptive in every way! The astounding limitations and the compelling consequent imperfections and inadequacies inherent in a normal human life may not be quite understood unless we resort to the science of today.

Science shows us that out of an unlimited range of existing things the human senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste can bring within their range only a minute part.

Let us consider 'sight' which has about the greatest reach. Sight depends upon light. And light is made up of electro-magnetic waves according to science and is measured in terms of its wavelength. The length between two crests of adjacent waves is called wavelength. The difference between the visible light such as red, blue and green and the invisible light such as infrared, ultraviolet and x-rays is due to their different wavelengths. The human eye can see only that light which has its wavelengths within certain limits. Outside of that it can see nothing. Red has a wavelength of .00007 cm. and violet a wavelength of .00004 cm. The human eye can see them and all other colours in between these wavelengths. The rest of the spectrum the eye cannot see. But the range known to science is vast—from cosmic rays with a wavelength of one trillionth of

a centimeter upto radio waves with wavelengths measured in many miles. Therefore it will be seen that visible light is only a minute part of the whole range. That means that the eyes, like the prison windows, can let in only a tiny part of the existing light and keep out much more. Just consider how tremendously a person's world-view and life would change if he could see a little more. He may begin to be called a psychic, a clairvoyant or a yogi! It must be particularly emphasised here that because these other wavelengths are invisible to us, it does not mean that they have no concern with us or we with them. Quite the contrary. They have their own values and functions and they affect and influence our lives whether we want it or not, irrespective of whether we know of them or not. (Visible light, too, does not have only the function of making things visible to us. It produces, for instance, chlorophyll from the plants, without which life as it is would not be possible on earth.) Phototherapy, the treatment of ailments by radiation, is a recognised science. And the effects of some of the invisible ranges such as x-rays, gamma rays and ultraviolet rays on the human body and mind are well known. Practically everyone knows the effects of full moonlight at night. Science has opened up a field here which yet remains to be further studied.

Our other senses are even more limited in their ranges. That is, they keep out much more than they admit. And similarly it is possible to conceive that, whether known or unknown, what is beyond these senses exerts its influence on us. In fact, 'Ultra-sound', the high frequency sound waves, have already begun to be used for medical purposes in the last three decades.

It must also be understood that each sense is only one mode of knowledge, a very partial knowledge about a thing, only one aspect of a thing. For instance, one can know a rose by sight in one way, by smell in another and by touch in a third and so on. One can well imagine that given yet other senses a man could know something still more about the same thing.

No wonder therefore that, confined to the small world of our senses, the world appears, in our more thoughtful moments, as something incomprehensible, an enigma, a word or a sentence taken out of context altogether:

Thus is the meaning of creation veiled;
For without context reads the cosmic page: (*Savitri*, p. 56)

And yet this is not the whole of ignorance. Whatever a man knows is limited. This limitation means taking into cognisance only a few facts out of an unlimited number. Therefore it cannot give a wholly true picture. It becomes a limited picture, a limited truth, limited to the person "viewing" it. Therefore a relative truth, relative to the "viewer"'s consciousness.

This may be considered in two ways, subjectively and objectively. (This distinction begins to disappear when the quest for knowledge goes somewhat

deeper—not only in yoga, where the knowledge by identity is considered the right knowledge, but also in science, where, when we probe the subatomic world, we find that there is no such thing as a neutral, impartial observer, that the observer, by the very observation, influences the event, becomes part of the event. Still, we may keep the distinction for practical purposes.)

Let us first consider the subjective truth. How infinitely diverse it is! Practically every man has his own ideas and opinions about the truth of everything. It may be a book, a person, a picture, a philosophy, a religion, a country or this whole world itself. What is good or right or beautiful or true to one person is not so to another. At least there is a difference in the degree no less than in the quality of appreciation. This would become quite obvious if we took into account the peoples of all the different countries of the world and their different national, racial, religious beliefs as well as aesthetic inclinations and individual idiosyncrasies. The diversity in degree as well as in kind is practically infinite. And if we add the time factor, that is, the changing consciousness of the same human being with time, the diversity becomes a veritable infinity in which any absolute truth is impossible to find. Nor, one supposes, can it be easily or readily expressed in such conditions. Lord Buddha is said to have observed silence when asked about the existence of God and Lord Jesus too kept silent when asked by Pilate, “What is Truth?”

Now let us consider the objective side. There are the sun, the moon, the stars and the earth. For many centuries prior to Galileo, or rather Copernicus,¹ it was an obvious and known ‘fact’ that the earth was a solid, compact, unmoving and immovable mass around which the sun, the moon and the stars revolved. How wrong this ‘fact’ is, how all our senses have been deceived, is today generally known. And yet how thoroughly they are deceived is perhaps not so generally known. Let us consider the earth which is nearest and most known to us.

Though we never feel a ripple, the earth is engaged in a tremendous dance. Spinning at the speed of 1000 miles per hour and moving around the sun at 20 miles per second, she is also playing in circles with the moon. Now leaning one way and now another, now coming closer to the sun and now slipping further away, she glides on, in relation to other stars along with the sun. At 13 miles per second she moves in the local star system, at 200 miles per second within the Milky Way and at 100 miles per second towards other galaxies, all at the same time and in different directions!

The apparently solid compact earth, on which we so unsuspectingly stand, is made up, for the most part—more than 99.99%—of empty space in which tiny points of light are whirling around at tremendous speeds. (All matter is made up of molecules and the molecules are made up of atoms and the atoms are made up

¹ This refers to western scientific knowledge. There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that a vast amount of astronomical knowledge existed in ancient India

of empty spaces in which electrons rush around the nucleus at great speeds—somewhat like our solar system in which planets revolve around the sun. But, relatively speaking, the atom contains more empty space than our solar system.) It is only to the gross bodily senses, dealing massively and simultaneously with innumerable billions of them, that they appear solid and compact. And of course the same is the case with our human bodies and everything else that we can see, that is, everything is made up of vast empty spaces with a few tiny points of light vibrating or whirling around.

The universe is an endless masquerade:
For nothing here is utterly what it seems,...

The world is other than we now think or see,
Our lives a deeper mystery than we have dreamed;...
(*Savitri*, pp. 61, 169)

The lines point to the truths both of physical and of psychological domains. (We may note here that the 'empty space' mentioned above only means that there is nothing perceptible to our senses here. It does not exclude the existence of electromagnetic or gravitational fields. For more than two centuries science presumed and postulated the existence of the 'ether'—an invisible all-permeating substance, as a medium of motion, to explain the propagation of light in interstellar spaces. With the Theory of Relativity, this postulate seems to have become unnecessary. And yet some kind of ether would seem to be necessary. Otherwise how can one explain any distortion or curvature in the metric properties of the space-time continuum that is the gravitational field in the new concept of Relativity? An absolute 'nothingness' can have no distortions or curvatures: there must be something, some quality, in the apparently empty space that responds to the gravitational force of the mass and becomes curved or distorted and is distinguished from other spaces! However, for some decades the scientists held that space was empty. But then a great change came with the Quantum Field Theory.

In the subatomic realm, a vacuum obviously is not empty. So where did the notion of a completely empty, barren, and sterile 'space' come from? We made it up: there is no such thing in the real world as 'empty space'. Empty space has infinite energy. (Gary Zukav in *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*.)

We are reminded of 'adi shakti', the Infinite Divine Mother of the Indian philosophies. It is of interest to note here that the Indian philosophies have considered 'akash', an invisible, immaterial, all-permeating substance as one of the basic elements and 'kala', that is Time, as another. The Jain philosophy has

considered two more such substances, 'dharmastikaya' as a medium of motion and 'adharmastikaya' as a medium of rest. And generally, the spiritual philosophies have recognised a number of planes made up of substances of different subtleness and qualities—ranging from the plane of visible matter to invisible planes of life and mind and then still onwards to the spiritual planes proper. All theistic religions accept the omnipresence of God and the Advaita considers Brahman as the subtlest, omnipresent, ultimate reality. One can only speculate that there must be many separate and yet intermingling and interacting layers or planes, the subtler penetrating and informing the grosser, with different and even inconceivable qualities in the invisible and immaterial substances which lie hidden in the apparently empty-looking space.

So now we can understand why our sense-born knowledge is not only limited but also defective and misleading and why the ancients called it 'aparavidya' which may be translated as 'not-absolute knowledge' that is 'relative knowledge'. Or more simply, 'avidya' that is 'not-knowledge', not true knowledge.

For true knowledge the standard is rather high:

For nothing is known while aught remains concealed;
The Truth is known only when all is seen. (*Savitri*, p. 257)

'Nothing is known' obviously means that nothing is rightly known or rightly understood because one does not have an all-encompassing view of anything, its origin, its true internal, inherent nature, its place in the over-all context, its value in time and its relations with innumerable other things that exist. Because nothing exists solely and independently on its own and everything is connected by perceptible or imperceptible bonds with everything else and therefore, until everything is known, one cannot rightly understand, rightly evaluate, rightly know, rightly judge.

Bell's Theorem, considered by some physicists to be the most profound discovery of science, tells us, in the words of David Bohm:

Parts are seen to be in immediate connection, in which their dynamical relationship depends, in an irreducible way, on the state of the whole system (and, indeed, on that of broader systems in which they are contained, extending ultimately and in principle to the entire universe). Thus, one is led to a new notion of unbroken wholeness which denies the classical idea of analyzability of the world into separately and independently existent parts...

Lincoln Barnett tells us in *The Universe and Dr. Einstein*, a book endorsed by Einstein himself:

In the evolution of scientific thought one fact has become impressively clear: there is no mystery of the physical world which does not point to a mystery beyond itself.... While these systems are distinguished by constantly increasing mathematical accuracy, it would be difficult today to find any scientist who imagines himself, because of his ability to discern previous errors, in a position to enunciate final truths.

The fact of our very basic human ignorance is well understood and recognised by the foremost scientists. In the same book Lincoln Barnett says: "... the aim of science is to describe and explain the world we live in..." The meaning of the word "explain" however, suffers a contraction with man's every step in quest of reality. Science cannot yet really "explain" electricity, magnetism and gravitation; their effects can be measured and predicted, but of their ultimate nature no more is known to the modern scientist than to Thales of Miletus, who first speculated on the electrification of amber around 585 B.C. Most contemporary physicists reject the notion that man can ever discover what these mysterious forces "really" are. Electricity, Bertrand Russell says,

is not a thing, like St. Paul's Cathedral; it is a way in which things behave. When we have told how things behave when they are electrified, and under what circumstances they are electrified, we have told all there is to tell.

Until recently scientists would have scorned such a thesis.

Charles Robert Richet, a Nobel Prize Winner in physiology, and the author of *The Sixth Sense*, says:

It is assumed that the phenomena which we now accept without surprise do not excite our astonishment because they are understood. But this is not the case. If they do not surprise us it is not because they are understood, it is because they are familiar; for, if that which is not understood ought to surprise us, we should be surprised at everything—the fall of a stone thrown into the air, the acorn which becomes an oak, mercury which expands when it is heated, iron attracted by a magnet, phosphorus which burns when it is rubbed...

Gary Zukav relates an amusing story in his *The Dancing Wu Li masters*:

Dr. Felix Smith, Head of Molecular Physics, Stanford Research Institute, once related to me the true story of a physicist friend who worked at Los Alamos after World War II. Seeking help on a difficult problem, he went to the great Hungarian mathematician, John von Neumann, who was at Los Alamos as a consultant.

“Simple,” said von Neumann. “This can be solved by using the method of characteristics.”

After the explanation the physicist said, “I’m afraid I don’t understand the method of characteristics.”

“Young man,” said von Neumann, “in mathematics you don’t understand things, you just get used to them.”

So now the scientists too have recognised the fact of our basic ignorance, the one that the mystics have been stressing through the ages. It is interesting to note that the more science advances the more it sounds like mysticism. It, too, has found that matter is a form of energy (not as yet of conscious energy but it is moving in that direction.) It, too, has found that space and time have relative values, not absolute as hithertofore believed. And it, too, finds the common language inadequate to describe the phenomena it encounters in the subatomic world. While the mystics’ words such as God, Spirit, Truth, Self, Brahman, Atman, Divine, etc. have long entered the common vocabulary and, in the process, have generally lost much of their true, inner meanings, science has resorted to the language of mathematics to express itself. While it has the advantage of being incorruptible, it has also, unfortunately, the disadvantage of being incomprehensible—not only to laymen but also to the mathematicians.

Generally, in history, it has always been philosophy that led with its intellectual theories and science that slowly followed. However, today the roles have been reversed. It is science that leads and philosophy is hardly able to follow. The reason is that science has adopted, or rather has been forced to adopt, the language of mathematics, whose meaning in philosophical terms nobody is able to make out with any certainty. Wittgenstein, one of the most prominent philosophers of this century, says, “The sole remaining task for philosophy is the analysis of language.” While Bertrand Russell puts it more bluntly: “Mathematics may be defined as the subject in which we never know what we are talking about, nor whether what we are saying is true.”

Gary Zukav says in *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*:

Quantum physicists ponder questions like,

Did a particle with momentum exist before we conducted an experiment to measure its momentum?

Did a particle with position exist before we conducted an experiment to measure its position?

And did any particles exist at all before we thought about them and measured them?

Did we create the particles that we are experimenting with?

Incredible as it may sound, this is a possibility that many physicists recognise. John Wheeler, a well-known physicist at Princeton, wrote: “May

the universe in some strange sense be “brought into being” by the participation of those who participate?... The vital act is the act of participation. ‘Participator’ is the incontrovertible new concept given by quantum mechanics. It strikes down the term ‘observer’ of classical theory, the man who stands safely behind the thick glass wall and watches what goes on without taking part. It can’t be done, quantum mechanics says.

It becomes interesting here to see what *Savitri* says about how we began our world:

Once in the immortal boundlessness of Self,
 In a vast of Truth and Consciousness and Light
 The soul looked out from its felicity.
 It felt the Spirit’s interminable bliss,
 It knew itself deathless, timeless, spaceless, one,
 It saw the Eternal, lived in the Infinite.
 Then, curious of a shadow thrown by Truth,
 It strained towards some otherness of self,

.....

A huge descent began, a giant fall:
 For what the spirit sees, creates a truth
 And what the soul imagines is made a world.

.....

Thus came, born from a blind tremendous choice,
 This great perplexed and discontented world,
 This haunt of Ignorance, this home of Pain:

Now reverting to the question of ‘knowledge’ the Upanishadic query of Sounak becomes relevant: “What is it by knowing which everything is known?” And Sage Angira’s answer, “Eternal Brahman.”

And while the task of obtaining such knowledge may seem too great and formidable, Sri Aurobindo assures us in *Savitri*:

When darkness deepens strangling the earth’s breast
 And man’s corporeal mind is the only lamp,
 As a thief’s in the night shall be the covert tread
 Of one who steps unseen into his house.
 A Voice ill-heard shall speak, the soul obey,
 A power into mind’s inner chamber steal,
 A charm and sweetness open life’s closed doors
 And beauty conquer the resisting world.
 The truth-light capture Nature by surprise,

A stealth of God compel the heart to bliss
And earth grow unexpectedly divine.
In Matter shall be lit the spirit's glow,
In body and body kindled the sacred birth;
Night shall awake to the anthem of the stars,
The days become a happy pilgrim march,
Our will a force of the Eternal's power,
And thought the rays of a spiritual sun.
A few shall see what none yet understands;
God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep;
For man shall not know the coming till its hour
And belief shall be not till the work is done.

And again:

We are sons of God and must be even as he:
His human portion, we must grow divine.
Our life is a paradox with God for key.

SCHOLARSHIP AND YOGA

“KEEP the scholar in you under check.”

This was the advice given to a young aspirant by a Yogi, himself a great Vedic scholar.

How true! For the pleasures of studying, reasoning and analysis have enthralled us so much that we find ourselves unable to escape from the hold of the active mind. The initial fervour of the heart for spiritual progress gets overlaid with a plethora of intellectual activity which revels in analysis, criticism and exposition of scriptures. The mind gets entangled in formulating gospels and codifying spiritual “truths” which it knows only from hearsay, imagination and inference. The ego comes in and takes pleasure in lecturing and quoting. Thus a promising spiritual career is wrecked by this overmastering passion to understand and expound things externally.

It is all the more difficult to avoid this error; for there is a truth behind this passion for mental studies. It is this that there is undoubtedly a strong utility in a mental knowledge of the Path, which is helpful in avoiding certain pitfalls. It is also helpful to know the metaphysical background with the mind, provided the mind is not rigid about the concepts it forms of spiritual things, and is plastic enough to yield to the deeper knowledge which comes as the soul grows.

But when intellectual activity becomes important for its own sake and is pursued beyond limit for the satisfaction of the mental ego or in the deluded hope that one would thereby be able to follow the spiritual path better, it becomes a serious matter. For the very habit of constant reading and analysis and thinking keeps the surface layers of mind in chronic agitation and prevents thereby the deeper self from emerging.

This tyranny of the intellect arises mainly out of the belief that the intellect is the highest power of our being; and it is indeed so, as far as our present manifest nature is concerned. But, while performing its legitimate role of discrimination, systematisation and classification, the intellect loves its constant buzz at its own level and refuses to cooperate with the higher faculties. Truly, it is opposed to the development of latent potentialities in us for this simple reason that it does not like to be exceeded. Just as the instinctive parts of man are opposed to the yoke of reasonableness and are rebellious towards any control by the developed mind, so too does the intellect resist any attempt by the deeper parts to subdue it into quietude or openness.

The scholarly activity of the intellect is all the more dangerous as it is not recognised as a danger and is often sadly taken for a legitimate part of the sadhana. It is easily forgotten that not only the vital being but also the intellect needs a scrupulous restraint.

The intellect is not to be starved out of existence. There is a legitimate function for it. It has to be the leader of the human consciousness so long as the

soul is not ready; but after that it has to step aside and open itself to higher light. Thereafter, to receive the Light and express it in human terms is its legitimate function. And its ultimate fulfilment is to get transformed into its divine equivalent in the Higher Nature, the Para-Prakriti.

A.D. SAVARDEKAR

WHERE THE HORIZON LEADS

My star has not yet set,
The call of the blue Beyond
Still enthralled my grudging self.
I enter into profound spheres of mystery.
Charged with an aeonic mission,
Installing at the adytum of my heart
A bright ball of peace,
Careless of the stiff haze
And the malicious looks of the hostiles,
I must trudge on mingling my aspirations
With the earth's innocent dreams.
The empyrean is too alluring
For me to lose the hope of reaching it.
If it be my fancy, I do not mind,
I can see the downpour
Of Sweetness and Light and Force
Transforming the sable night into glittering dawn.
I only need to go where the Horizon leads.

SEIKH ABDUL KASAM

DIMENSIONS OF INDIAN PROSE IN ENGLISH

THOUGH Indian prose in English is older than Indian verse in English and has been engaging the minds of a large number of intellectuals since the first decade of the nineteenth century, the question about the validity of using the English medium for creative and critical purposes has been raised again and again. The best defence of Indian writing in English came from Kamala Das who could handle both the media successfully:

Don't write in English, they said,
English is not your mother-tongue. Why not leave
Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
Every one of you? Why not let me speak in
Any language I like? The language I speak
Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses,
All mine, mine alone. It is half English, half
Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,
It is as human as I am human—
It voices my joys, my longings, my
Hopes—it
Is human speech, the speech of the mind that is
Here and not there, a mind that sees and hears and
Is aware.

When it comes to practice, her stand seems to have been vindicated more convincingly in prose than in verse inasmuch as the Indian prose writer—using it in oratory, journalism, political, religious, philosophical, spiritual and scientific studies as well as in more creative endeavours like fiction, autobiography, biography and literary criticism—has evolved from a slavish imitator of his English masters to a creative artist in his own right.

As can be easily surmised, the earliest use of English prose was to flatter the British rulers in a language pompous and wearisome. Passages like the following from a typical Indian addressing an English administrator are too numerous to escape our notice:

The natives of India of every description, My Lord, regard you as the Sun of Justice... Your transcendent reputation, My Lord, nothing can deprive us of and like the Rose of the East, it will long continue to shed its perfume over our native land.

Even very learned Indians, in their excessive enthusiasm to display their mastery of the English language, could produce only a prose that was disgustingly ornate

and openly and uncreatively imitative of Victorian rhetoric.

I stand before you—not as a Columbus, proudly claiming the meed of a discoverer of unknown worlds; I stand before you—not as a Newton, whose god-like vision penetrated the blue depths of ether and saw a new and a bright orb, cradled in infinity; I deal in no mysteries; I am no sophist, ravishing the ear with melodious yet unmeaning sounds; captivating the eye with sparkling yet meretricious ornamentalism—beautiful yet artificial flowers, glittering yet false diamonds. No! The fact I enunciate is a simple one; even he who runneth may read it. But its simplicity ought not to destroy its grave importance. You all know it—you all see it.

Such writings were common during what Humayun Kabir called the Age of Innocence in Indo-British relations.

It is more in speeches than in writings that there has been a glaring misuse of the prose medium. The history of Indian oratory is full of names that achieved a meteoric rise but, after a while, met with a pathetic fall. The struggle for independence demanded rabble-rousers in a large number and they were not found wanting. But the pity is that many of them making their appearance in different regions of the country were mistaken for Ciceros and Demostheneses by the highbrow as well as by the lowbrow. Only the passage of time could seal the fate of many and prove the hollowness of the claim of numerous charitable critics. Surendranath Banerjee in one of his essays observes that capacity for taking pains, love of one's country, power of concentration, acquaintance with the speeches and writings of Burke, Froude, Lord Morley and other great writers, love of humanity and faith in high ideals are the prerequisites of a successful orator. Though he was acclaimed as a great orator when he was alive, his speeches have no enduring value. If Surendranath and his ilk have been forgotten it is because in their speeches the equality of words to things is very often neglected, and trivial sentiments and simple notions disappoint the attention to which they are recommended by sonorous epithets and swelling figures. If Burke's speeches have secured a permanent place in English literature it is because they combine in excellent manner simplicity and directness of reasoning with ardour and splendour of eloquence. The grandeur of his imagery and the sonorousness of his periods raise his prose to the level of great poetry. This does not mean that none of our orators deserve to be remembered. Swami Vivekananda with a noble mission and a prophetic vision has to his credit some speeches of enduring value. As Romain Rolland has stated, Vivekananda's speech at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago was like a tongue of flame. "Among the grey wastes of cold dissertation, it fired the souls of the listening throng." Vivekananda's learning is remarkable, his argument logical and his style virile. He once claimed that his ideal of language is his master's language,

most colloquial and yet most expressive. His great strength is of course a great message "which is not tied to any dos and don'ts." He has a fund of stories and parables and can use analogies drawn from science. Though a sannyasin rooted in Vedantic philosophy, he never shied away from scientific learning.

The quicker you can empty it the quicker it will be filled up by the external air; and if you close all the doors and every aperture, that which is within will remain, but that which is outside will never come in, and that which is within will stagnate, degenerate and become poisoned. A river is continually emptying itself into the ocean and is continually filling up again. Bar not the exit into the ocean. The moment you do that, death seizes you.

The one contemporary statesman who has understood the secret of Vivekananda's success as a speaker and adopted his technique with great effect is Rajaji whose speeches and writings are characterized by a simple, athletic and forceful style:

Morality without religion is like calories without vitamins; it may do some good, particularly in cutting out fanaticism, but it will not build the inner strength which comes from the practice of good conduct which boys and girls are taught to perform as part of their homage to a supreme being.

Do you know that it needs three things to make a truly great man?... First, a man's brain. And a woman's heart. And a child's temperament—a child's freshness of outlook.

During the Gandhian age and earlier, poetry and drama could not compete with political prose which, because of its vitality, became the dominant form. Rammohan Roy, considered the first of the Indian masters of English prose, wrote numerous tracts and pamphlets on political subjects, the rights of women, the freedom of the press, English education, the revenue and judicial systems and religious toleration in a prose whose distinguishing features were clear thinking and soundness of judgement. With the advent of Gandhiji, all other political writers were overshadowed and he straddled the age like a colossus not only through his deeds but also through his speeches and writings on political, social, economic, cultural and spiritual questions. His stimulating thoughts and moral earnestness added weight to whatever he said. But he was not a scholar. Nor would he claim that his works had a literary value. Avoiding all oratorical flourishes like the plague, he wrote in a simple, transparent style. He was too modest to attempt anything that posterity would not willingly let die. He even expressed the desire that his writings should be cremated with his body.

For authentic literary expression, we have to turn to Gokhale's political

prose, fusing thought with emotion and sparkling with flashes of poetry. Firm and measured statements totally free from exaggeration, absolute mastery of facts, and scrupulous fairness to others; points of view, qualities that are seldom found in modern political utterances, characterize Gokhale's writings. Here is his verdict on the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon when it came to a close:

For seven long years all eyes had constantly to turn to one masterful figure in the land—now in admiration, now in astonishment, more often in anger and in pain till at last it has become difficult to realize that a change has really come. For a parallel to such an administration, we must, I think, go back to the times of Aurangzeb in the history of our own country. There we find the same attempt at a rule excessively centralized and intensely personal, the same strenuous purpose, the same overpowering consciousness of duty, the same marvellous capacity for work, the same sense of loneliness, the same persistence in a policy of distress and repression, resulting in bitter exasperation all round.... His wonderful intellectual gifts, his brilliant powers of expression, his phenomenal energy, his boundless enthusiasm for work—these will ever be a theme of just and unstinted praise. But the Gods are jealous, and amidst such lavish endowments, they withheld from him a sympathetic imagination without which no man can ever understand an alien people; and it is a sad truth that to the end of his administration Lord Curzon did not really understand the people of India.

Gokhale knew well that praise adds pungency to one's attack.

Where religious and spiritual prose is concerned, the three figures worth mentioning are Sri Aurobindo, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and J. Krishnamurti. This is one area where the Indian heritage has conferred a unique advantage on the modern writers of our country. Exploiting this fully, Dr. Radhakrishnan, in his volumes on Indian Philosophy, interpreted it in an idiom intelligible and appealing to the West. He was rightly called the liaison officer who attempted to bring the East and the West to a close understanding though this led to his presentation of Hinduism not as it is or ever has been but as he would have remoulded it nearer to his heart's desire. His knowledge of Western thought and his mastery of English perfectly suited his role as the East's spiritual ambassador to the West. But his lack of originality cannot be glossed over. Nor could his eloquence and rhetoric compensate it fully. And this limitation denied him a secure place in the history of thought which is guaranteed to his rival and more eminent British contemporary, Bertrand Russell.

J. Krishnamurti could think originally with a vengeance and write poetic prose of a majestic type on a variety of themes. Contrasting the rich and the poor, for example, he writes,

However cultured, unobtrusive, ancient and polished, the rich have an

impenetrable and assured aloofness, that inviolable certainty and hardness that is difficult to break down. They are not the possessors of wealth, but are possessed by wealth, which is worse than death. Their conceit is philanthropy; they think they are trustees of their wealth; they have charities, create endowments; they are the makers, the builders, the givers. They build churches, temples, but their god is the god of their gold. With so much poverty and degradation, one must have a very thick skin to be rich.... The greater the outward show the greater the inward poverty.

Very different from the other two, Sri Aurobindo is "a new type of thinker, one who combines in his vision the alacrity of the West with the illumination of the East." At once poet, critic, scholar, thinker, nationalist and humanist, he is the most accomplished of the Indian writers in English, having written about four thousand pages of prose. His magnum opus, *The Life Divine*, affirming "a divine life upon earth and an immortal sense in mortal existence" has often been praised for "the sweep of its intricate thought-structure, its penetrating vision, its bold insights and the uniform dignity and elevation of its style." His is a very flexible style capable of diverse tones and effects including irony and sarcasm. The work is a metaphysical statement on man's realization of God within and without, but its literary merits are undeniable. Even abstruse arguments are expressed in a lucid language.

The earliest preoccupation of man in his awakened thoughts and, as it seems, his inevitable and ultimate preoccupation,—for it survives the longest periods of scepticism and returns after every banishment,—is also the highest which his thought can envisage. It manifests itself in the divination of Godhead, the impulse towards perfection, the search after pure Truth and unmixed Bliss, the sense of a secret immortality. The ancient dawns of human knowledge have left us their witness to this constant aspiration, today we see a humanity satiated but not satisfied by victorious analysis of the externalities of Nature preparing to return to its primeval longings. The earliest formula of Wisdom promises to be its last,—God, Light, Freedom, Immortality....

We speak of the evolution of Life in Matter, the evolution of Mind in Life; but evolution is a word which merely states the phenomenon without explaining it. For there seems to be no reason why Life should evolve out of material elements or Mind out of living form, unless we accept the Vedantic solution that Life is already involved in Matter and Mind in Life because in essence Matter is a form of veiled Life, Life a form of veiled Consciousness. And then there seems to be little objection to a farther step in the series and the admission that mental consciousness may itself be only a form and a veil of higher states which are beyond mind. In that case, the

unconquerable impulse of man towards God, Light, Bliss, Freedom, Immortality presents itself in its right place in the chain as simply the imperative impulse by which Nature is seeking to evolve beyond Mind, and appears to be as natural, true and just as the impulse towards Life which she has planted in certain forms of Matter or the impulse towards Mind which she has planted in certain forms of Life....

(To be continued)

P. MARUDANAYAGAM

ROAD TO NOWHERE

“WHY do you sit here, O stranger,
 Have you not noticed the board?
 This road leads Nowhere. Come,
 I'll take you back anywhere you need to go.”
 Thus said the well-meaning persons
 When they saw him sitting at the alley's dead-end,
 Day after day, hour after hour
 An enigmatic smile on his lips he shook his head
 And kept on gazing at the deserted causeway.
 His persistence puzzled all
 Who had just arrived or were proceeding farther.
 Sometimes when by seeming chance they wandered
 Onto this path that led Nowhere,
 With him their cares lessened, their fears were forgotten,
 And once in a while they also drifted into some Unknown.
 And when perforce they fell back into the rut,
 They realised that all their strivings of life
 And all the highways of actions
 Led to this dead-end,
 Onto this road that led Nowhere.

SHYAM KUMARI

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Fate and Free-Will: A Sri Aurobindo Overview. By *Amal Kumar De*. Published by National Council of Education, Bengal, 1992. Price: Rs. 50/-.

“I WILL seize Fate by the throat”—said Beethoven when he realised that he was slowly becoming deaf. While in one way he did triumph over it, Fate ran its own course in a relentless manner. Beethoven went on producing his musical compositions with increasing mastery and power, reaching marvellous peaks of creativity to remain for ages as his precious and noble gifts. But then, at the time of the première of his Ninth Symphony in Vienna, in 1824, he was absolutely deaf and could not hear a thing of the loud applause of cries and clappings that followed it. Fate had its sway. Was it fated that Beethoven be deaf and Homer blind for their creativity to blossom forth in all its splendour? Certainly the misfortunes were not of their making. Was it their Prarabdha or Daiva or Karma that their destiny should be moulded this way? Is that the method by which God helps those who help themselves? But even Olympian gods and goddesses are subject to the rule of Fate whose decree none can challenge. And it was the moira of Achilles to die soon after killing Hector in the historic Trojan War; he could have of course avoided it by not fighting. But, then, to stretch the argument somewhat, there would not have been the glorious Greek civilisation and, following it, the majesty of the Roman Empire. Truly inexplicable seem to be the workings of this power called variously Ananke, Necessity, Fate, Destiny, Providence, Fortune or Purpose. If for Virgil Fate is the hostile will of the gods, the poet of the Mahabharata considers its work without human action as not possible. It could also be, according to Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*, original foresight. The issue of Fate and Free-Will is quite age-old in human inquiry and there are many tangled knots which are extremely difficult to unravel in their subtlety.

Amal Kumar De’s *Fate and Free-Will* is a fairly comprehensive Aurobindonian overview regarding this complex problem and is a result of painstaking research carried out by him over several years. It was originally serialised in the *Advent* and has therefore the merit of being seen by the late M.P. Pandit. Indeed, the present book carries his preface which succinctly states that the author “weighs Sri Aurobindo’s perception as against the major schools of thought on the subject and leaves the reader with ample food for cogitation”. In the author’s own words: “I propose to make in this dissertation a humble endeavour as far as eclectically possible to find out how Sri Aurobindo in spelling out his ideas on all these [topics] has given a new direction to the theories of fate and free-will, thereby reorienting the entire gamut of what I call the geometry of fate vis-à-vis free-will.” The presentation of the author is a happy blend of philosophy and poetry making the otherwise heavy nature of the metaphysical arguments living and multifaceted. Amongst the very few specialised studies of

Sri Aurobindo's system of thought, this monograph, despite a few shortcomings, should be considered to be pretty rewarding. Sri Aurobindo has stated his position on the problem, though not in the form of a single thesis or treatise, in several of his writings and most explicitly in his *Savitri*. It is this which A.K. De collates and expounds in their diverse contexts.

The book consists of 18 chapters including the conclusion which was written as a sequel to the *Advent*-series. In the first chapter we are briefly introduced to the three Schools of Fate, Free-Will, and Fate-cum-Free-Will. The question of predestination *versus* self-reliance, *Daiva versus Purushkar*, is generally pitched for us to choose one or the other; but "it is not as simple as that", as Sri Aurobindo reminds us, and the supreme choice to be made is given only once. And then, as if to complicate the matter further, there is the third term, the divine grace, *Divya Kripa*. If human effort is needed for the fulfilment of destiny, then this destiny itself could be responsible in urging the effort, the shortcomings of the effort being supplemented by grace. There is no way of knowing, and the mind can only argue.

The author proceeds to give a detailed etymological appraisal of terms such as Destiny, Fate, *Daiva*, Providence. This is followed by a survey of the early concept of Fate in Greek Mythology and then in Western Philosophy. The conflict between Man's fall from Paradise as a result of the freedom of his will and scientific determinism based on the causative origin of all phenomena is highlighted. But in the indeterminacy Principle of the Quantum World, while the extreme Laplacian obduracy is removed, assertion is still made in the governance of the material universe by a definite Law of Nature. The probabilistic character of this Law is at times taken for the presence of free-will, to which Einstein refused to subscribe till the end. And yet can we assert, *à la Spinoza*, whom Einstein followed, that there is no such thing as free-will? Stephen Hawking is the latest Determinacy-proponent who considers the universe to be self-contained with its laws and there is no necessity of introducing an external agent like God in it.

In opposition to the deterministic is the fatalistic school of thought. In this context A.K. De raises a pertinent question, whether Sri Aurobindo was a fatalist in the conventional sense, and rightly answers it by saying "No". But his statement that Sri Aurobindo's concept of fate is more probabilistic than deterministic in the manner of a mathematical probability-law is to put the issue too mechanistically. No doubt there are several layers of determinism and there is a complex play of forces; but none of these has the fixed mathematical tone and character of the law of probability. The one thing that Sri Aurobindo asserts is the absoluteness of the Supreme Vision which will also have to work itself out here through the various possibilities. *En passant* we may mention the author's penchant for writing inconsequential mathematical equations and introducing vague analogies from physics in the midst of such serious arguments; these are

quite unnecessary and could have been gainfully avoided.

A.K. De is at his best while discussing the Doctrine of Karma and, related with it, the issues of fate, reincarnation, and divine grace. If Karma is something that leads to inevitable consequences, then, says De following Sri Aurobindo, "fate does not cause results but only dispenses results". In the light of this strongly anti-fatalistic doctrine, we may say: "man not only suffers the consequences of his past Karma but also generates future Karma." In that sense the past Karmas of a disciple are wiped out by the Guru but he can create new Karmas, these are generally more difficult to eliminate. There is a further question too. Can we apply the Doctrine of Karma to the Avatar himself? Does not Rama speak of his past Karma while bewailing the loss of Sita? And where does his Karma reside? These questions are not directly taken up by the author but his discussion of Prarabdha, Sanchita, and Agami Karma is very perceptive and the conclusion that "only Sanchita and Agami Karmas can be destroyed by God-realisation... [and] Prarabdha... by being worked out" is perfectly valid. Summing up the Doctrine of Karma he quotes Sri Aurobindo as follows: "There is a distinction, not always strictly observed, between Fate and Karma. Karma is the principle of action in the universe with its stream of cause and infallible effect, and for man the sum of his past actions whose results reveal themselves not at once, but in the dispensation of Time, partly in this life, mostly in lives to come. Fate seems a more mysterious power imposing itself on men despite all their will and endeavour from outside them and above—daivam, a power from the Gods."

There is a greater power than man's effort in destroying Prarabdha Karma—the Divine Grace, Daivi Kripa. But this power, says the author, is "... a quasi-fatalistic... a supra-deterministic phenomenon which does not appear to depend on the theory of Karma resulting from individual effort or Purushkar to create Bhagya". That is indeed true and the divine grace cannot be demanded. But, quotes the author from Sri Aurobindo: "I have always seen that there has been really a long unobserved preparation before the Grace intervenes, and also, after it has intervened, one has still to put in a good deal of work to keep and develop what one has got—as it is in all other things until there is a complete siddhi." In the final analysis the Divine chooses what the surrendered heart has chosen.

Thus Karma, personal effort, and the divine grace seem to be the active terms that operate either simultaneously or in tandem in working out individual as well as cosmic destiny. Apropos of Fate-*cum*-Free-Will the author narrates an incident from Sri Aurobindo's life: "We find that Sri Aurobindo at an appropriate time had received a necessary Adesha or an inner call which he had heeded before he finally left for Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo thus parried a likely disaster which might have perhaps otherwise befallen him. This means that the Supreme Will of the Divine appeared through destiny which Sri Aurobindo

could foresee and thereafter he exercised his free-will to sail for Pondicherry to herald his neo-soteriological Yoga for the transformation of humanity struggling hard to wriggle out of its vito-physical nature.” Perhaps somewhat speculative, but the Will working through Destiny is significant.

If fate cannot be fulfilled without human effort, as the Mahabharata maintains, then does it not run contrary to Manu’s assertion that the acts of fate are beyond man’s control? De answers by saying that the isolationist approach of Manu is a “casuistry” and it is wrong to segregate action from fate as the former is inherently present in the latter. In other words, “the concept of fate delinked from free-will is an impossibility since one is merely a foil to the other within the network of the integral circuit itself”. De quotes from Sri Aurobindo: “Fate and free-will are movements of one indivisible energy.” And what is that energy? If it is the divine Shakti then she transcends all, fate and free-will and Karma, and accepts only the Supreme Will. Discovery by each soul of its identity with this divine Energy is discovering its own individuality in the process of supreme manifestation; therein is its true free-will. Oneness with the Supreme Will—that is what finally matters. The three elements involved are Man, Nature, and God:

Man is a dynamo for the cosmic work;
Nature does most in him, God the high rest:
Only his soul’s acceptance is his own.

Without this acceptance by the soul evolutionary manifestation would not have been possible—to be the serf of Nature, to find its individuality, swabhava and swadharma

The “intrinsic worth” of Sri Aurobindo’s approach in the issue of Fate and Free-Will is elegantly summarised by De as follows: “The transition of Fate from our daily life at the human level to the ultimate evolution of Fate as a suprafatalistic force at the gnostic or supramental level is the keynote that Sri Aurobindo strikes in his integral philosophy.”

This little monograph of A.K. De, over some 150 pages, is a commendable piece of research carried out by him in diverse details touching upon the problem of fate and free-will. If he is perfectly at home in the classical Sanskrit literature, he also shows an intimate knowledge of Western thought and moves with ease in the Shakespearean world of fate. The scholarship of the author is evident throughout as we witness the discussions that proceed with apt quotations from different sources. One important reference, however, is missed by him—this is the article by K.D. Sethna, “Free-will in Sri Aurobindo’s Vision”, about which Sri Aurobindo himself said that “it is excellent” and that “in fact it could not be bettered”. We are sure the author will take note of this in the next edition. Also, it will be much appreciated if he supplies us the original references made by him in the discussions. These are necessary to get an exact idea about the context in

which the authors are making their statements; this is particularly necessary in the case of Sri Aurobindo for the several shades he brings in his writings. Also, it is unfortunate that the work should have suffered from too many proof-reading lapses. Nevertheless none of these should reduce the “intrinsic worth” of the effort.

R. Y. DESHPANDE

A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS

(Continued from the issue of October 1993)

10. BORN A KING—MADE A KING

“His days are numbered,” muttered the royal physician, wiping the tears trickling out of his eyes. “I am helpless. May God save the king.”

- The news spread like wild fire.

“Ha .ha. .ha.. King Elanchet Chenni is on his deathbed. The all-powerful monarch of the Chola Empire is counting his days. Oh! How melodious are these words to our ears that were thirsting for such news,” said the dying king’s relatives, turned enemies owing to some palace intrigue. “Heirless he dies. Who will be the next king? Do we stand a chance?”

They celebrated the death of the king with wine and women. But the news brought by a spy called a halt to their jubilant mood. Their faces turned red with anger and shame. They gritted their teeth and punched the air with their clenched fists.

“Well! Well! If that is so the queen must die,” roared one.

“Yes!” raved another. “But before she delivers her child, for according to the spy she is in an advanced stage of pregnancy.”

While the enemies racked their brains to devise a plan to kill the pregnant queen and yet escape punishment, the news of the conspiracy reached Erumpidar Thalaiyār who was always on the alert. He was not only a well-known poet of that era, but also the elder brother of the queen.

Leaving the land and the people of Kaviri Poom Pattinam, capital of the Chola Kingdom, to the mercy of the honest and faithful ministers of the dead king, Erumpidar Thalaiyār escorted his pregnant sister under cover of darkness to a thick forest. In the depth of the forest was the ashram of a sage.

The sage, who had already envisaged the purpose of their visit, entrusted the pregnant queen to the sadhikas in his ashram and told them: “Guard her, you servants of God. Guard her as the eyelids would the eye.”

After a refreshing bath in the nearby stream, Poet Erumpidar Thalaiyār joined the sage for lunch.

“I have no other way but to leave my sister here. But I’ll take her back when the political turmoil settles down... Everything will be fine when the right person occupies the throne,” said the poet.

The sage nodded his head as he munched the sliced edible root.

“Who will be our next king?. . God only knows,” said the poet raising both his hands heavenward.

Just at that moment, a sadhika shuffled in and said: “The queen has delivered a son.”

The poet was all smiles

“You wanted a king God has sent you one,” said the sage, stroking his grey beard

“A son to the royal family is a boon I have news for my people. I must go. Till the boy grows up, his whereabouts should be kept a guarded secret. I know you will help me in this regard ”

“Don’t you worry. God is great,” said the sage

Together the sage and the poet went to the hut where the queen was resting after her accouchement

The newborn babe slept peacefully by the side of his apprehensive mother.

The poet scooped up the bonny babe in his arms Cuddling him against his chest, he kissed his chubby cheeks. “Valavan shall be your name,” declared he.

“Valavan (opulence). . What an appropriate name!... I am sure when Valavan ascends the throne, he will add to the opulence of the Chola Kingdom,” blessed the sage

Erumpidar Thalāiyār took his leave.

Back home, he called a meeting of the ministers in the palace and said: “By the grace of God, we are blessed with a king. My sister, the queen, has delivered a boy child. But I’ll not disclose the whereabouts of the queen and the baby prince, till some time to come Continue to administer the kingdom till the prince is mature enough to occupy the throne. . Let it be known to the public that the queen and the prince are hale and hearty ”

The political enemies of the dead king who were hell-bent on usurping the throne sent their spies to every nook and corner of the world with orders to slay Valavan, the prince.

The search for Valavan went on for years. The ministers with the able assistance of the poet Erumpidar Thalāiyār administered the kingdom causing no grievance to the public. Baby Valavan grew to be a child, all the time escaping the eagle-eyed spies

But one among the spies was perhaps more vigilant than the others One night he followed Erumpidar Thalāiyār without his being noticed, into the forest. Wow! He found the queen and the prince in a hut in the ashram.

On the morning of the next day Valavan disappeared.

The queen made a hue and cry over the absence of her son Erupidar Thalāiyār sensed some foul play He was sure that the child had been kidnapped, and so frantically searched for him for fear that he might be lost forever

The spy who had kidnapped Valavan imprisoned him in a remote place and awaited further orders from his employers.

By the time Erumpidar Thalāiyār found the prison, it was on fire.

Child Valavan became panicky The air was rent with his cries.

Unable to bear the plight of his nephew, the poet rushed into the burning prison and rescued the child whose leg was caught in the flames and charred.

Together they made their escape to Karur, the Chera Capital and lived

there peacefully like any other nonentities

News was spread in Kaviri Poom Pattinam that Prince Valavan was charred to death in a fire-accident. The ministers grew anxious. The long absence of Erumpidar Thalayar only aggravated their fear.

In Karur, Karikalan (he of the charred leg) grew up under the tutelage of his uncle, who taught him the letters and spoke at length on the glory of the prince's ancestors.

As days passed the people at Kaviri Poom Pattinam, finding anarchy intolerable, unanimously decided to choose their own king.

According to Tamil polity, when a king died without an heir, his people set an elephant to wander at will with a garland on its trunk and whomsoever it garlanded was declared king, unopposed. In matters of succession to the throne, age really did not matter.

Decorated from tusk to tail, the royal elephant with a garland on its trunk ambled its way from Kazhumalam (now known as Seerkazhi) and straightaway reached Karur.

Many a young man, many an old one craving for power and affluence stood in the way of the elephant and motioned it to garland them by bending down their heads.

The animal ignored them all. To the surprise of everyone, it garlanded a child playing in the street. It then held him by its trunk and lifted him up on to its back and shuffled its way home to Kaviri Poom Pattinam.

Erumpidar Thalayar followed the elephant, all the time praising God and looking jubilantly at his nephew seated proudly on the animal's back.

When Valavan or Karikalan or Karikal Valavan, as he was variously called, was crowned king of the Chola Empire, he was just five years old.

11. APPEARANCES ARE DECEPTIVE

Karikalan who ascended the throne at the very young age of five, ruled the Chola Empire for a very long period till he breathed his last at the ripe old age of eighty-five. Renowned for his unquenchable élan for war and ambition to bring all other neighbouring kings and chieftains under his control, he proved to be not only a valiant warrior but also a competent and just ruler.

"No rogue ever escaped punishment and never was an innocent victimised in his court." Thus sang the court-poets of his day.

Legend has it that when Karikalan was still in his teens a strange case was brought to his court.

The complainant, a middle-aged traveller from a faraway land, entered the court like a whirlwind. He was followed by another young man. But the former looked apprehensively at the teenager seated on the throne.

“I doubt whether the king will be able to solve my problem, for he is too young for such knots!” the traveller said in a loud tone.

“Rest awhile, weary traveller! The old wiseman who would sit in judgement over your case is on his way. I’ll go now and send him within a few minutes,” said the boy-king.

While the courtiers looked askance at the king, the latter with a mischievous smile lingering on his face left the court.

Anxious minutes passed.

The tapping sound of a walking stick attracted everyone’s attention. To their surprise they saw an octogenarian staggering his way to the court. He was hunchbacked and not a hair was seen on his head. His drooping moustache and his long flowing beard were gray. His lower jaw quivered.

While every courtier wondered who the old man was, the latter moved towards an unoccupied chair and sat in it.

The presence of the old wiseman filled the traveller with hope. With a great sense of satisfaction he addressed the old man thus: “Wiseman! I have brought a very strange case to your court.”

The old man with a sway of his hand motioned him to proceed with it.

“I am a traveller and have visited many a country. Last night I rested in a temple, approximately thirty miles away from your court. Today at dawn when I was about to mount my horse, a tired and haggard-looking man approached me and said: ‘Sir! I am a weary traveller My horse died on the way. May I ride with you as far as the market square, where I can buy a horse?’”

“Why not?” said I, taking pity on this young man standing beside me. I made him sit behind me and rode on. When we reached the market square I asked him to dismount.

“To my surprise, he refused and shouted at the top of his voice: ‘What? Must you try to cheat me? Is this the reward I deserve for helping you reach this place?’”

“Stupefied over the cunning of this rogue, I stood still. Meanwhile a crowd had collected.

“This fellow told the crowd: ‘This horse is mine. I carried this gentleman from the suburb to the market square. Now look at his knavery! He refuses to dismount.’”

“I heard someone in the crowd propose: ‘Why not go to our wise judge? And so here I am. I want my horse back and this knave deservedly punished.’”

The old wiseman stroked his beard in a thoughtful way. Looking at the accused, he asked: “And what have you to say?”

“Nothing, Sir, except that the horse is mine, and this complainant is a liar.”

The judge beckoned a servant and told him to lead the horse in question to the royal stable.

“Would you be able to recognise your horse when it is amidst other

horses?” asked the judge.

“Certainly, Sir!” replied the young man

“I have known my horse ever since it was a colt... How can I ever fail to recognise it?” asserted the traveller.

The judge then led them to the stable. There were more than twenty-five horses.

The traveller was given the first chance of pointing out the horse in question. He instantly did it. The young man too pointed out the horse without any difficulty.

The judge then returned to his court and his verdict ran thus:

“Though the traveller and the young man pointed out the same horse, the horse certainly belongs to the young man. When he approached the horse, it turned its head and stretched its neck towards him. That’s how horses behave with those familiar to them. But when the traveller approached the same horse, it turned back its ear and lifted one hoof. That is how they behave with strangers. Hence the young man will get back his horse and the traveller shall get seventy-five strokes on his back with an oily cane.”

No sooner was the verdict given than the middle-aged traveller fell at the feet of the judge and cringed to reduce the number of strokes.

“No! Cheats must be deservingly punished. And for underestimating the judging capacity of the king, you will receive twenty-five strokes extra.” So saying, the judge removed his wig, false beard and moustache. He then threw away his walking-stick and stood erect like a warrior.

Everyone’s eyes opened wide in wonder and awe as they saw King Karikalan emerge out of the old wiseman’s cloak.

(More legends on the way)

P. RAJA

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Special Seventy-third Seminar

14 February 1993

HOW TO FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE MOTHER ON THE PATH TO THE DIVINE LIFE?

Speech by Rahul Deshpande

NATURE, the executive power of the Spirit, has evolved out of the realm of Inconscience, after an immense effort, man. He, in his ignorance, considers himself to be the pinnacle of creation though, in reality, he is no more than a transitional being. But Nature, or rather Prakriti in her upward evolution, strives to rise beyond man and effectuate a radical and integral transformation of his imperfect being and life. She works towards a complete manifestation of the involved Spirit and "to throw off her mask and to reveal herself as the luminous Consciousness-Force carrying in her the eternal Existence and its universal Delight of being."¹ Matter is the evolutionary base of man in this physical universe. Therefore, the mental and vital powers in him that have to emerge out of Matter find themselves heavily subjected to and conditioned by Matter. He cannot therefore be the ultimate product of evolutionary Nature. So the mental being thus evolved by Nature strives to free himself from his present limitations and rise to a higher evolutionary status beyond mind, which Sri Aurobindo has termed the "Supermind", and transform his present life into the Divine Life.

But Nature's process is usually long, tortuous and painstaking. It is only in man that she can evolve with a conscious will in the instrument. This conscious self-evolution is yoga. In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo has defined yoga with precision. He says that by yoga we mean "a methodised effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being and a union of the human individual with the universal and transcendent Existence we see partially expressed in man and in the Cosmos"²

In India, from time immemorial, there have been many schools of yoga advocating various aims of this spiritual self-evolution. But there is also the long-standing dichotomy between the two great opposites. Spirit and Matter. Some systems of yoga had the attainment of the pure, ineffable, immutable Spirit to the total exclusion of Matter and the phenomena of becoming as their sole aim,

¹ *The Life Divine* (Cent Ed , Vol 19), p 890

² *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 20), p 2

while their counterparts preached relentlessly the doctrine of Materialism and dismissed the Spirit as a mere hallucination and a vain chimera.

Sri Aurobindo in line with the ancient Indian mystics asserts unequivocally that “The two are one: Spirit is the soul and reality of that which we sense as Matter; Matter is a form and body of that which we realise as Spirit.”¹ He recognises the Spirit as the inhabitant of this bodily tenement and accepts Matter as a fit and noble material out of which the Spirit constantly weaves out its garbs. Furthermore, he reveals that there is a series of ascending terms between Matter and Spirit, and that the Spirit by its own volition has involved itself in Matter, and evolution is the reverse process by which it unveils itself. The cardinal aim set before man is therefore to realise the Spirit as the Omnipresent Reality and to unveil it here and transform this earthly life into the life divine. This is the grand and majestic synthetic vision of Sri Aurobindo

But the process of transformation laid down by Sri Aurobindo in his Integral Yoga is extremely difficult and arduous. So one may be easily disheartened by the immense difficulties which are to be faced on the path. But Sri Aurobindo also maintains that, however difficult, the path can be safely traversed and all difficulties conquered if certain essential conditions are fulfilled. He clearly enunciates the basic requisites for the follower of the Integral Yoga. He states, “Get the psychic being in front and keep it there, putting its power on the mind, vital and physical, so that it shall communicate to them its force of single-minded aspiration, trust, faith, surrender, direct and immediate detection of whatever is wrong in the nature and turned towards ego and error, away from Light and Truth. Eliminate egoism in all its forms; eliminate it from every movement of your consciousness. Develop the cosmic consciousness.... Find in place of the ego the true being—a portion of the Divine.”² Sri Aurobindo himself admits that these are no easy steps to practise. Elsewhere, he says, “Aspiration, constant and sincere and the will to turn to the Divine alone are the best means to bring forward the psychic”.³ And he also says that the sole condition required in the yoga is perfect sincerity.

Openness to the Mother so that Her Force can truly work in the Sadhak is also an indispensable condition. As Sri Aurobindo says, “By remaining psychically open to the Mother, all that is necessary for work or for Sadhana develops progressively,—that is one of the chief secrets, the central secret of Sadhana.”⁴ In another letter he gives us the same guidance: “Keep yourself open to the Mother and in perfect union with her. Make yourself entirely plastic to her touch and let her mould you swiftly towards perfection.”⁵

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

² *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 23), p 554

³ *Ibid* , (Cent Ed , Vol 24), p 1100

⁴ *The Mother* (Cent Ed , Vol 25), p 121

⁵ *Ibid*

While dealing with the basis of Sadhana, Sri Aurobindo has said, “Yes, that is the true basis. In the perfect equality wholly united with the Mother—so the higher consciousness can be lived and brought even into the outermost parts of the nature.”¹

Thus, the safest, surest, swiftest and happiest way to realise the goal of the Integral Yoga is to be absolutely sincere in one’s aspiration and psychically open to the Mother so that Her Force may progressively work out the complete transformation of our being and bring to us the Divine Life.

I’ll conclude my speech by a quotation from Sri Aurobindo which pointedly and laconically drives home the point made above. It is a one-sentence answer to the question to which we have addressed ourselves in this Seminar. Sri Aurobindo says, “Remain firm and turned in the one direction—towards the Mother”² Then all will be done for us

¹ *The Mother* (Cent Ed Vol 25), p 176

² *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 23), p 631