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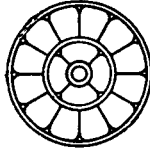
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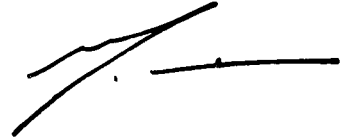
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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THE POWER OF THE PSYCHIC

AN EYE-OPENER BY THE MOTHER

It is usually the psychic which guides the being. One knows nothing about it because one is not conscious of it but usually it is that which guides the being. If one is very attentive, one becomes aware of it. But the majority of men haven't the least idea of it. For instance, when they have decided, in their outer ignorance, to do something, and instead of their being able to do it, all the circumstances are so organised that they do something else, they start shouting, storming, flying into a rage against fate, saying (that depends on what they believe, their beliefs) that Nature is wicked or their destiny baleful or God unjust, or... no matter what (it depends on what they believe). Whilst most of the time it is just the very circumstance which was most favourable for their inner development. And naturally, if you ask the psychic to help you to fashion a pleasant life for yourself, to earn money, have children who will be the pride of the family, etc., well, the psychic will not help you. But it will create for you all the circumstances necessary to awaken something in you so that the need of union with the Divine may be born in your consciousness. At times you have made fine plans, and if they had succeeded, you would have been more and more encrusted in your outer ignorance, your stupid little ambition and your aimless activity. Whilst if you receive a good shock, and the post you coveted is denied to you, the plan you made is shattered, and you find yourself completely thwarted, then, sometimes this opposition opens to you a door on something truer and deeper. And when you are a little awake and look back, if you are in the least sincere, you say: "Ah! it wasn't I who was right—it was Nature or the divine Grace or my psychic being who did it." It is the psychic being which organised that.

A LETTER FROM SRI AUROBINDO

TO DILIP KUMAR ROY

THE difficulties that remain, although not identical, are similar in their cause and their fundamental nature to those you have either largely or completely overcome and they can be conquered in the same way; it is a question of time and of acquiescence within yourself in the pressure from the Divine which makes man change.

Human nature and the character of the individual are a formation that has arisen in and out of the inconscience of the material world and can never get entirely free from the pressure of that Inconscience. As consciousness grows in the being born into this material world, it takes the form of an Ignorance slowly admitting or striving with difficulty after knowledge and human nature is made of that Ignorance and the character of the individual is made from the elements of the Ignorance. It is largely mechanistic like everything else in material Nature and there is almost invariably a resistance and, more often than not, a strong and stubborn resistance to any change demanded from it. The character is made up of habits and it clings to them, is disposed to think them the very law of its being and it is a hard job to get it to change at all except under a strong pressure of circumstances. Especially in the physical parts, the body, the physical mind, the physical life movements, there is this resistance; the tamasic element in Nature is powerful there, what the Gita describes as *aprakash*, absence of light, and *apravritti*, a tendency to inertia, inactivity, unwillingness to make an effort and, as a result, even when the effort is made, a constant readiness to doubt, to despond and despair, to give up, renounce the aim and the endeavour, collapse. Fortunately, there is also in human nature a *sattwic* element which turns towards light and a *rajasic* or kinetic element which desires and needs to act and can be made to desire not only change but constant progress. But these too, owing to the limitations of human ignorance and the obstructions of the fundamental inconscience, suffer from pettiness and division and can resist as well as assist the spiritual endeavour. The spiritual change which yoga demands from human nature and individual character is, therefore, full of difficulties, one may almost say that it is the most difficult of all human aspirations and efforts. In so far as it can get the *sattwic* and the *rajasic* (kinetic) elements to assist it, its path is made easier but even the *sattwic* element can resist by attachment to old ideas, to preconceived notions, to mental preferences and partial judgments, to opinions and reasonings which come in the way of higher truth and to which it is attached: the kinetic element resists by its egoism, its passions, desires and strong attachments, its vanity and self-esteem, its constant habit of demand and many other obstacles. The resistance of the vital has a more violent character than the others and it brings to the aid of the others its own violence and passion and that

is a source of all the acute difficulty, revolt, upheavals and disorders which mar the course of the yoga. The Divine is there, but He does not ignore the conditions, the laws, the circumstances of Nature; it is under these conditions that He does all His work, His work in the world and in man and consequently also in the sadhak, the aspirant, even in the God-knower and God-lover; even the saint and the sage continue to have difficulties and to be limited by their human nature. A complete liberation and a complete perfection or the complete possession of the Divine and possession by the Divine is possible, but it does not usually happen by an easy miracle or a series of miracles. The miracle can and does happen but only when there is the full call and complete self-giving of the soul and the entire widest opening of the nature.

Still, if the call of the soul is there, although not yet full, however great and obstinate the difficulties, there can be no final and irretrievable failure; even when the thread is broken it is taken up again and reunited and carried to its end. There is a working in the nature itself in response to the inner need which, however slowly, brings about the result. But a certain inner consent is needed, the progress that you have marked in yourself is due to the fact that there was this consent in the soul and also in part of the nature; the change was insisted on by the mind and desired by part of the vital; the resistance in part of the mind and part of the vital made it slow and difficult but could not prevent it. The strong development you have observed in your powers with its proof in the response of others is due to the same reason; part of your being consented to it, wanted and needed it as a self-fulfilment of the nature and the soul wanted it as a means of service to the Divine; the rest was due to the pressure of the Divine Force and my pressure. As for the distaste, the lack of interest etc. all this is temporary and belongs only to a part of you. In so far as it comes from a kind of *vairagya*, it may have helped you in overcoming some of your attachments, but it is defective in so far as the element of *tamas* and *apavritti* is there; it was not so fundamental as to resist the victorious drive of the pressure of the Divine Force.

You ask what I want you to do. What I want is that you should persist and give more and more that assent in you which brought about the progress you have made so that here too the resistance may diminish and eventually disappear.

And you must now get rid of an exaggerated insistence on the use of reason and the correctness of your individual reasoning and its right to decide in all matters. The reason has its place especially with regard to certain physical things and general worldly questions—though even there it is a very fallible judge—or in the formation of metaphysical conclusions and generalisations; but its claim to be the decisive authority in matters of yoga or in spiritual things is untenable. The activities of the outward intellect there lead only to the formation of personal opinions, not to the discovery of Truth. It has always been understood in India that the reason and its logic or its judgment cannot give you the

realisation of spiritual truths but can only assist in an intellectual presentation of ideas; realisation comes by intuition and inner experience. Reason and intellectuality cannot make you see the Divine, it is the soul that sees. Mind and the other instruments can only share in the vision when it is imparted to them by the soul and welcome and rejoice in it. But also the mind may prevent it or at least stand long in the way of the realisation or the vision. For its prepossessions, preconceived opinions and mental preferences may build a wall of arguments against the spiritual truth that has to be realised and refuse to accept it if it presents itself in a form which does not conform to its own previous ideas: so also it may prevent one from recognising the Divine if the Divine presents himself in a form for which the intellect is not prepared or which in any detail runs counter to its prejudgments and prejudices. One can depend on one's reason in other matters provided the mind tries to be open and impartial and free from undue passion and is prepared to concede that it is not always right and may err; but it is not safe to depend on it alone in matters which escape its jurisdiction, specially in spiritual realisation and in matters of yoga which belong to a different order of knowledge.

The extreme acuteness of your difficulties is due to the yoga having come down against the bedrock of Inconscience which is the fundamental basis of all resistance in the individual and in the world to the victory of the Spirit and the Divine Work that is leading towards that victory. The difficulties themselves are general in the Asram as well as in the outside world. Doubt, discouragement, diminution or loss of faith, waning of the vital enthusiasm for the ideal, perplexity and a baffling of the hope for the future are the common features of the difficulty. In the world outside there are much worse symptoms such as the general increase of cynicism, a refusal to believe in anything at all, a decrease of honesty, an immense corruption, a preoccupation with food, money, comfort, pleasure, to the exclusion of higher things and a general expectation of worse and worse things awaiting the world. All that, however acute, is a temporary phenomenon for which those who know anything about the workings of the world-energy and the workings of the Spirit were prepared. I myself foresaw that this worst would come, the darkness of night before the dawn; therefore I am not discouraged. I know what is preparing behind the darkness and can see and feel the first signs of its coming. Those who seek for the Divine have to stand firm and persist in their seeking; after a time, the darkness will fade and begin to disappear and the Light will come.

9-4-1947

A LETTER FROM NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

TO AN AUROBINDONIAN AT KATHMANDU

“CREATIVE SLUMBER” means sleep which is not death, absolute inertia but an apparent immobility, a self-absorbed quiet out of which springs all creativity. The author refers to the original inconscience out of which the universe has evolved and is evolving. The Rigveda speaks of it as the original *tamas* that was the parent of the creation. As for “virgin moment” I would like to have the whole passage. But normally it should mean an absolute new moment, the like of which was never before, which promises a new unexpected future.

15.10.1958

Comment on the Terms explained in the Letter

The phrase “creative slumber” is in line 21 of Book One, Canto One of *Savitri*. The phrase “virgin moment” occurs in *Essays on the Gita*, page 200, U S. Ed., 1950.

Not inappropriately we may quote here a passage from Jawaharlal Nehru’s *Discovery of India*, (Anchor Books, New York, 1945) page 7:

“Aurobindo Ghose writes somewhere of the present as the pure and virgin moment, that razor’s edge of time and existence which divides the past from the future, and is, and yet, instantaneously is not. The phrase is attractive, and yet what does it mean? The virgin moment emerging from the veil of the future in all its naked purity, coming into contact with us, and immediately becoming the soiled and stale past. Is it we that soil it and violate it? Or is the moment not so virgin after all, for it is bound up with all the harlotry of the past?”

“Whether there is any such thing as human freedom in the philosophic sense or whether there is only an automatic determinism, I do not know. A very great deal appears certainly to be determined by the past complex of events which bears down and often overwhelms the individual. Possibly even the inner urge that he experiences, that apparent exercise of freewill, is itself conditioned.... A belief in an absolute determinism seems to me to lead inevitably to complete inaction, to death in life.”

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

SOME PERSONAL LETTERS, OLD AND RECENT

I WAS greatly impressed by your “Golden Vision”. It reveals the Mother in her full reality—not only the Universal Form of her but also the Individual Being. People often say that now that the Mother has left her body she is a Universal Form—as if the bodily shape alone constituted her individuality. What you saw shows not only the cosmic power set to greater use by her departure from the Body. It shows also how closely and organically the Universal and the Individual in her were related and how naturally they interplay

It would seem that her individuality no less than her universality can now come home more vividly. Her individual aspect acted on you in the very way the embodied Mother used to do: she put her hands over your eyes just as she often did when she was tangible on the earth. But she repeated the old gesture with a luminosity and a meaningfulness which exceeded the old personal relationship.

This meaningfulness, disclosed by your vision, acquires a plenitude by her bringing in one hand a lotus and in the other a hammer. The lotus would point to a power of effecting a spontaneous opening of our being to the Divine, especially to the Divine as Avatar. The hammer suggests a forceful action of swift grace. And what she did with the hammer to you personally is for me the climax—the most momentous part—of the vision. You do not say much of the change brought about in you, but from your few hints I conclude as follows.

The Mother has broken open your normal individuality and made something of you spread its consciousness in the universal existence. This change has come about by at once a profound interiorisation, a further plunging into the inner self and, as a result of this new deepening, a new widening.

How would I understand this new widening? I would say that it modifies the whole aspect of your future movements to distant places. I am sure that you did not go on travelling here and there merely because you needed an outing. There was an inner call to meet the outside world for the sake of that world's good. Now, according to me, there will be an answer from you not simply to whatever possibility of good there may be for the world's sake. If only the world were concerned, you could sit at home and not go out at all and, without going out, get some work done. At present, there will be a going out purely because the Divine shall call you for purposes that you may not even know. *The thinking mind will have no part in the motive of your travels.* The thinking mind has been hit open and something more inward has been set free—something inward beyond all your previous depth. Deriving from that suddenly revealed centre, your movements are bound to be a sheer *motiveless* response to the Divine Will—the individual Mother within you going forth ecstatically into the Universal Mother which is your highest being outside the body that is the visible Champaklal

(14.5.1979)

*

I'll start with the end of your letter of 26th May. The R. C. Zaehner who met me years ago is certainly not whoever has come to Madras recently under the name Zaehner. My fellow emigrated to the Christian heaven (or so at least he must have thought he was doing) even before I completed my review of his book, a review ten times longer than his book. By the way, this heaven seems to be a queer place. St. Thomas Aquinas says that one of the experiences there of blessedness is a full view of all the tortures and sufferings going on in hell far below and so luckily escaped by the saved ones.

Hell, of course, is full of gnashing of teeth, and the topic of Nashe raised in your letter is quite appropriate as the next one. Ogden Nashe is, I think, connected with Basic English. Oh pardon me, I am blundering awfully. The Basic-English-walla is simply Ogden. But in any case my Nashe is not the author of the modern poem you refer to. He lived soon after the Elizabethan age. The line I once quoted to you and its two successors—

Brightness falls from the air,
Queens have died young and fair,
Dust hath closed Helen's eye—

are some of the most delicately magical in the English language. But it is reported that the opening verse which has a psychic pathos has come to us accidentally in its present form! Nashe is supposed to have actually written:

Brightness falls from the hair...

This would be quite consistent with the thought-sense of the next two phrases, but how far away from their soul-sense! Indeed it would take much off from that romantic world-cry which we hear in them in continuation with the other version of the opening words.

I didn't know that the flower going by the name "Passion-flower" in English is called "Krishna-Kamal" in Maharashtra. The suggestions are quite opposite—divine suffering in one case and divine delight in the other. I don't think Sri Aurobindo had either symbolism in mind. Nor could he have attended to the significance given by the Mother to *Passiflora caerulea*: "Silence"—although "Silence" chimes very well with Sri Aurobindo's "Nameless" representing itself in his poem "Rose of God" as "Passion-flower".

"Passion-flower of the nameless, bud of the mystical name."

You have asked: "What is psychic other than laughter and delight and love of the Divine?" The answer is: "luminous strength." If it were no more than what you have mentioned, it could never bring about the Divine's Victory in

earthly evolution. Remember that the god of the psyche is Agni who in the Rigveda is named "Son of Force". Sri Aurobindo has spoken of the psychic being not only in terms of Matthew Arnold's well-known "sweetness and light": he has also ascribed strength to it, the power to conquer, the power to bear, the power not only to stand four-square against mortality but also to establish what Agni is in his cosmic function, "the Immortal in the mortal". And the psyche's strength is accompanied, as Sri Aurobindo says, by "light" no less than "sweetness". Your formula compasses only the latter in its threefold aspect: I have used the epithet "luminous" for "strength"—thus answering to Sri Aurobindo's "light". This light is at the same time sunniness and illumination, although the illumination is not of truth-knowledge but of truth-feeling, an inward turn spontaneously sensing what is God's Will rather than instantly visioning the plan and purpose of the Supreme as does the intuitive spiritual consciousness.

Yes, the Rigveda has a multiple numerology. One of its most expressive numbers is "thousand", meaning "completeness". A 100 is explained by Sri Aurobindo as perhaps suggesting the 7 planes multiplied by themselves in their interaction and the 49 thus arrived at to be added to another 49 so as to signify by 98 not only descent but also ascent—and then number 1 added at the top for the supreme Unknown and number 1 added at the bottom for the same at the other pole, the result coming to a century.

My personal number, as decided by the Mother, is 15 which also reduces itself to $1+5=6$, the number of what she has called "The New Creation", something which I am very much in need of in both my inner and outer being. The flower symbolising "New Creation" is the tuberose, a flower which used to be a favourite of mine before I knew my number was 15. But what the Mother considered to be my flower was the one she named "Krishna's Light in the Mind".

(25.6 1983)

*

I have promised to tell you why I cancelled the operation on my right thigh which was to counter the defect that had resulted from the serious thigh-fracture I had suffered. Let me first sketch the background of this final negative after all the positives that had set me on a course which almost everybody had disapproved of.

First was a general message from the Mother when I was thinking of the possible dangers in moving about after the period in the Nursing Home: "Fear nothing." Then, at a time of rather depressive uncertainty, revolving the theme of an operation: "I shall see you through." Again, in the night of 20.3.92, after hearing from a doctor friend, himself an orthopaedic surgeon, that the operation would mean three days of acute pain and seven days of constant pain: "Leave everything in my hands." Finally, at the Samadhi on 22.3.92 I figured myself as

kneeling to the Mother as I used to do every afternoon when, on finishing her lunch with Pranab, she would go to her bathroom by an inner door and come out by an outer one leading to where I would be sitting and waiting for her. When I told her of my difficulties and perplexities I heard her say: "I'm with you." These words took away all doubts and fears.

My doctor nephew came to Pondy from the USA for a few days in November 1992. He raised a question which had never been considered before. He spoke of the formidable risk of infection in the case of a bone-operation done in India where the extreme precaution taken in the USA was unavoidably absent. Naturally this was serious food for thought. If the infection proved refractory as it very well might, the leg would have to be cut off from mid-thigh. As usual I put the matter to the Mother. Nearly two months passed but there was no reply. On the 16th of January this year at night I again pressed her for an answer. I said, "I don't want to suggest anything favourable. I leave it to you to say whatever you wish." In the morning, as if out of the blue, I got the words: "Yes, there is the danger, but keep your faith intact."

I discerned no positive assurance here as in the previous instances. Though no negation faced me, the statement was ambiguous. It seemed to imply that there would be a real test for my faith: the danger might be such that my faith would be strained to the utmost. On the other hand, if I could retain my faith in spite of everything looking awful I would come through. Perhaps the statement implied that I should not lose my faith even if the danger proved such as to render the operation a failure? My nephew had told me: "When bones are joined by metal screws and plates the combination is often liable to an infection which can resist all antibiotics." A great seriousness came over me after the Mother's message. I felt I had to gather as much strength as I could to face the uncertain future. In the afternoon at the Samadhi I had the sensation of the wide-spreading sturdy Service Tree merging with my being and creating a solid steady strength in my limbs. I was sure I could bear whatever complications might arise at the site of the surgery.

Two or three days afterwards, the doctor friend, who had earlier warned me about pain and whom I had not yet told of the Mother's pronouncement, asked me what I hoped to do with my leg made straight by an operation. I said: "With the help of my 'walker' I shall be able to move a little on my own in my rooms and go more easily than now to the bathroom. Of course, I shall never be able to move out of the house on my "Canadian Canes" (hand-crutches). Even to make a round of my rooms with them would be out of the question. The possibility of falling again would be too great." Then my friend remarked: "The advantages of the surgery are marginal compared with the suffering, the inconvenience and the risks involved." At this, a wavering vision of my own about the smallness of the advantages even if the operation was a perfect success became vivid and clear. Still I refrained from making any decision by mere thought. My friend's words

were submitted to a deeper realm of consciousness, a wide silence beyond human hopes and fears. Soon there was a waft from it, shaking somewhat the old firm resolution. But I wanted a quick definite decision as my nephew was to be informed as soon as possible whether, as planned by him, he should come to Pondicherry to attend the operation. A resolve crystallised, with the Mother's ambiguous message colouring it, that the operation should be cancelled. This was at about 7.45 a.m. the next day. I prepared a note for the Ashram doctor who is in charge of the Nursing Home where the operation was to be carried out. He wrote back:

"I received your note with a sense of relief truly. Somehow my own feeling was not very happy about this—but once you and Dr. Bhattacharya decided between yourselves I had to pursue it dutifully. Good that it is over now."

(24 3 1993)

*

I am glad *The Problem of Aryan Origins* has reached you. I am sorry to hear from you that it has oversights as well as insights. But hopefully it has dealt with the central issues in an adequate way and would administer a salutary knock on the wooden head of Jan Gonda whose latest "authoritative" pronouncements you have sent me. I had never thought he could be so sweepingly supercilious in his judgments. As regards the symbolic-spiritual interpretation of the Rigveda in Sri Aurobindo's *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* to which he has given a passing footnote, he should have offered a reason for rejecting it so out of hand. But I notice that he has left—inevitably like all other non-Aurobindonian interpreters—a definite joint in his own glittering armour.

Take the phrase on p. 24 of his "Introduction to the Veda in general and the R̥gveda in particular" about "the indigenous inhabitants (*dāsa* or *dasyu*)" with whom the R̥gvedics fought: "Against these enemies, not always distinguishable from demoniac enemies...." The moment this admission is made, Gonda lies vulnerable to Sri Aurobindo's argument apropos of the *dāsa-dasyu*.

We may put the argument as follows. Instead of looking at the Rigveda piecemeal we should cast a glance at it as a whole. Then we make a striking discovery. There are passages in which the spiritual-symbolic interpretation is the sole one possible and all others are completely excluded. There are no passages in which we lack a choice either between this interpretation and a nature-poetry—*e.g.*, the supplantation of night by sunrise, with cows and rain-rivers and sky disclosed—or between the spiritual-symbolic exegesis and the reading of human enemies. So neither such a reading nor the nature-poetry is indispensable, and the spiritual-symbolic vision which is absolutely imperative in several hymns and, unlike both of the other alternatives, is never completely excluded but always remains possible in all the rest of the cases, stands out as the

most logical, the single consistent and sufficient explanation of the *dāsa-dasyu*.

In an earlier instalment sent by you of Gonda's writings I come across the statement: "Natural phenomena and their mythological, symbolical or esoterical interpretation are often interwoven: the luminous phenomena connected with dawn appear like—no, as—cows..." (p. 242). What, then, is "absurd" and "unfounded" about interpreting, as Sri Aurobindo does, the proper name "Gotama" of a Rishi as "most radiant" (Fn. 47, p. 244) because of the relations between cows (*go*) and morning-light, relations which Gonda himself admits in that very footnote on *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*? Besides, Gonda goes so far as to state on p. 245: "There is, in general, almost universal agreement about the poets' intentions to convey, by the symbols and images of cows, another and deeper meaning than the surface one in passages such as 4, 41, 5 stating that the big cow—i.e. poetic art—which with her milk gives a thousand gushes is expected to yield now also as if she had gone through the pasture..." What Gonda disputes is that such a meaning is to be seen everywhere. On a second look I observe that even that footnote does not run down Sri Aurobindo altogether. It says that "some modern mystics and philosophers—among them Aurobindo, e.g. in *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, Pondicherry 1952—go decidedly too far in assuming symbolism and allegories." Mark the expression: "too far." Here again is a joint in the armour. If we can show that in a good number of instances—as Gonda himself admits—"symbolism and allegories" can be assumed and that nowhere are they completely ruled out in spite of a naturalistic or realistic appearance of the expressions, then Gonda's indignation at the Aurobindonian sense of "Gotama" can be exposed as unwarranted.

The one point at which he is likely to be a great stickler is his obsession by the theory of an Aryan invasion. But here too I see the armour carrying a bit of a joint. On p. 23 I read almost what Keith wrote in 1922: "It is generally assumed that the Aryan invaders entered by the western passes of the Hindu Kush and proceeded thence through the Punjab to the east. That advance itself—which in all probability covered some centuries—is not reflected in the hymns, most of which seem to have been composed in the country round the Sarasvatī river, in the hilly and best parts of the Punjab." It is expected by Indologists like Gonda that the "advance" assumed would be reflected in the Rīgveda. If, against such an expectation, it is not reflected, what is the ground for taking it for granted? Analogically, if the entry itself into India, which we would most expect to be reflected, finds not the slightest reflection, what reason have we to assume it?

Once the invasion-obsession can be lifted off, the chronology—c. 1500 B.C.—appears quite arbitrary. Do we have any grounds to believe that the Rīgveda is subsequent to the Harappā Culture, the Indus Valley Civilisation, which is now said to have ended in c. 1700 B.C.? The only argument possible is that its story of destroying a large number of fortified towns, mighty strongholds, seems to point in the direction of the numerous citadels of the Indus Valley

Civilisation. But Gonda does not see his Aryan invaders as destroyers of cities like Mohenjodaro and Harappa. He even has the phrase about the enemies of the Rigvedics: “The indigenous inhabitants (*dāsa* or *dasyu*)—often but without sufficient evidence identified with the survivors of the Indus culture” (p. 24). In no way does Gonda show us any link between the Indus Valley Civilisation and his Aryan invaders. How then can he argue that they arrived after its downfall? No ground remains to stick to c. 1500 B.C. or any post-Harappan date. If so, why talk even of an invasion at any time?

All in all, the historical tactics of Gonda are illegitimate. To put it in jocular terms, they are as if those of a sophistical Goonda! (24.6 1992)

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I cannot help addressing you familiarly by your first name because your “Offering in Celebration of ‘Life-Poetry-Yoga’ with love” has gone straight to the core of my heart where all formalities drop in the light of a spontaneous inner relationship as of soul to comrade soul.

It is the first time a Parsi has responded warmly and happily to my monthly series in *Mother India* and with such an originality of expression. The word “celebration” brings a gesture both of rejoicing and of honouring—it carries an air of festivity on the one hand and on the other an aura of reverence. My series seems to make you smile and laugh intimately at the same time that it brings to your eyes the vision of an ideal distance where one’s finest hopes are fulfilled. A stylist like Flaubert would have been thrilled at your *mot juste*, though I doubt if he could have entered, for all his insight into complex character, the inner world of Aurobindonian reveries and realities in which we so closely meet in spite of being outwardly strangers.

My aim in “Life—Poetry—Yoga” has been to write not just from book-knowledge but from the stuff of my own experience or, if you like, book-knowledge as felt on my own pulses. All the problems that come to me have a family-relationship with the highways and byways of difficulty and solution that I myself have traversed. (19.8.1993)

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You have posed a number of points which call for discriminate consideration. You write: “One of the biggest reasons which gives rise to the fear of defeat in me is the urge for perfection. Nothing short of it satisfies me, and consequently I’m ever dissatisfied. I may be ahead of people of my age, but I have a sense of know-nothing-at-all. Though I am at the top in my class, I’m not really happy because I want to be as good as the professor, if not better!”

Well, to be satisfied is to stop progressing—there must be a “beyond”—but

the beyond is to be seen as a happy prospect for progress, we must be elated by it instead of being miserable with our present condition. Dissatisfaction without depression: this must be our motto.

You have referred to "defeat" and later say: "That lurking sense of possible defeat—the question 'What will happen if I don't reach the highest I aim at?'—balks my efforts." It is the sincere attempt to surpass oneself that counts. If circumstances thwart your success, you must not think there has been a waste of effort and time. An inner development has come by the very attempt to reach out to a greater goal. Even a lifelong failure to realise one's highest objective should not cause a feeling of frustration. The inner development on the way to a seeming nowhere is the criterion of success. I remember a Chinese saying: "Better to be a crystal and be broken than to lie a mere tile intact for ever on a roof-top."

Keep in mind what Sri Aurobindo has said about his own work. After referring to the terrific difficulties he has faced in the new earth-transforming Yoga he has toiled at—difficulties greater than any encountered by any spiritual aspirant in the past—and after mentioning his faith in the ultimate fruition of his colossal labour, he adds: "But even if I still saw the chance that it might come to nothing .., I would go on unperturbed, because I would still have done to the best of my power the work that I had to do, and what is so done always counts in the economy of the universe."

Mark the words. "so done." It spotlights the inner spirit, the self-dedication, the sense of being the instrument of the Supreme Will. To whatever small extent we can, we must be Aurobindonian in our attitude to the job in hand and calmly move apace.

You have written: "I experience a greater joy in doing work with full involvement than in exclusive meditation. During meditation I feel peaceful and concentrated no doubt, but the joy of progressing comes only while working with dedication and sincerity even if I don't remember the Mother continuously during work but only occasionally. But again if I work keeping some immediate result in mind I feel restless and tortured. I feel happy and fulfilled only when I work peacefully and persistently, free from the thought of result, because then I automatically get into a meditating poise... I am such a mixture of quirks and idiosyncrasies. I want you to help me go right."

Exclusive meditation is not to be ruled out. We don't have to regard it as inaction. There are occasions in the soul's life for rapt inwardness. But, by and large, to carry on, with the face turned to the Mother's light, whatever work falls to our lot is more creative in terms of the spirituality Sri Aurobindo has revealed, for this spirituality aims at a radical change of the outer being and at a new wakeful world of interrelations. At first we may not remember the Mother all the time, but a self-consecration at the start of a work and a self-consecration at the end are sufficient in the early stages of Yoga. When the inmost soul becomes a

conscious flame in our days and a living mystery in our nights, then a kind of automatic offering of the work to the Divine all the time takes place. We carry the aura of the inner around the outer and are effortlessly guided to do everything in consonance with the inner's intimacy with the Divine—an atmosphere of humble holiness working out things envelops all our activity. Along with the urge to be perfect in every venture and be more and more productively dynamic, there has to be the aspiration to be perfectly in the hands of the Supreme. Those lines of Shelley's, which you recall me as quoting to you—

The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow—

point you precisely to the state towards which I am asking you to aspire. At first glance it may appear to strike a note of escapism, but actually Shelley was not only a fervent idealist but also an ardent reformist. He yearned to liberate the world from the obscurantism of priests and the despotism of kings. Mind and body clear of shackles—such was the visionary drive behind his great lyrical drama, *Prometheus Unbound*. From that “something afar” where there is freedom from our sorrowful sphere he longed to bring a new light, love and liberty to that sphere. For what was initially seen at a distance was the true self, the hidden reality of what is found here and now. It has to be invoked as if it were a perfection to be evoked from our depths. The wonderful Beyond is like a mirror of a marvellous Within—or rather a realised form prefiguring the beauty and bliss waiting to emerge from the secret recesses of the Unknown behind man's reverie-rhythmed heart. Sri Aurobindo has vividly flashed on our eyes the ultimate result on earth of “the desire of the moth for the star” that is the Shelleyan cry:

It comes at last, the day foreseen of old,
What John in Patmos saw, what Shelley dreamed.
Vision and vain imagination deemed,
The City of Delight, the Age of Gold.

We have to keep the sense of this waiting City and that emergent Age alive in our thoughts and feelings. I see from your response to Nature from your roof-top that a frequent glimmer of this sense is a part of your life. And your ache for perfection is in its root a recurring echo of it. (9.9.1993)

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 24 November 1993)

Faith in God

Experiences on the Way

YOU remember the picture of Sri Aurobindo on the New Year Calendar? Being an outsider, I was given only the Calendar with the Mother's picture. But I wanted the other very much, and somehow I procured it. I hung it beside the picture of Sri Krishna on my window near the head of my cot. My friends asked me to remove it and place it by the side rather than behind my head, so that I could always see it while lying on the bed. The idea appealed to me. And Sri Ramkrishna's picture was there; both of them side by side would look well. But to my surprise whenever I wanted to remove it, I heard distinctly his voice, "No, no! I'm quite comfortable here. Don't remove me!" I was struck dumb.

The other day I was mopping the floor of my room as I am wont to do. When I came near this picture, suddenly I felt the Presence of the Lord standing there—a massive powerful Presence. The entire room was filled with the atmosphere of that Presence. My whole being was as if held in a trance before the Presence and the utter ecstasy of it!

Here is another story. A rather complicated and heart-rending tale that baffles reason. It is about a rich family, respectable, upright and honest. This family was inclined towards Brahma Samaj and did not have much faith in a personal God. My uncle was very friendly with them particularly because of their younger daughter who was a marvellous singer. One day my uncle thought of going on a trip to Shillong with that family. Shillong is a very beautiful place with hills and rivers, trees and flowers and fruits in plenty: an ideal place for my uncle's temperament. He asked me to come along too and I agreed. But my mother did not allow me to go as I had a bad sore throat and Shillong being a cold place she feared an aggravation of the trouble. This was indeed a grace as you will see later on.

Uncle started on the journey with a party of five people. They had their own car and were going up the hills. Uncle's whole being bubbled like a fountain of joy. He sat beside the driver, the others were at the back. The girl started singing rapturously. Her father said, "Dilip, let us exchange seats. Then you two can sing together and your spirits will soar together towards heaven and regale us no end." Uncle did so. He had a tremendous vitality, as you know, and could transmit it to others. All were thoroughly enjoying the duet. But soon, when the car was going through many twists and turns on the hilly road, the driver suddenly lost control of the vehicle and it went off the edge of the road, careened

and rolled down the slope of the hill till it reached the bottom of the valley Uncle had perceived the danger early and was able to open the door and jump through it and had landed safely in a bush. The driver had an instant death, three others were somehow safe, but where was the father? People near about rushed to the scene. They began searching and calling out for him. They heard a faint "I'm here" and found him lying helpless, pressed by one of the wheels of the car. With great difficulty they pulled him out and took him to the hospital. It was found that all his ribs had been crushed. He died within a few days.

His wife was grief-stricken. After a year her daughter too died, the girl who had a wonderful voice, so sweet was it that Gandhiji called her the Nightingale of Bengal.¹

The tragedy did not end here. After two or three years the younger brother of the girl, an exceptionally brilliant student, also died. Now remained only the utterly bereaved widow. After quite a few more years she developed cancer. When uncle tried to console her by saying, "Pray to God," she became grave and said very forcefully, "Dilip, please don't utter that word in my presence."

This tremendous, yet natural *abhuman* towards God—very few people under similar circumstances would be able to overcome it. Her thinking must have been "If there is indeed a God, why this terrible curse on my innocent happy family?"

In contrast look at the other side of life. How I was saved from the jaws of death. It happened in the middle of the heavy Calcutta traffic. I stepped down from a tram and was crossing the road in a hurry, without due caution. Suddenly I saw that a car was coming at me at great speed from the right while a bus was coming from the left. Not knowing what to do and all a-tremble, I lost my senses and stood transfixed. The bus driver, perceiving my predicament, brought the bus to a screeching halt inches away from me, and, pointing a finger at me, motioned me to pass. I ran for my life and exclaimed, "Thank God, oh thank God!"

How many times such miracles, small and big, happened in my life and are still happening!

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

¹ *Nirodbaran's note* Dilip Kumar Roy was her teacher and was very fond of her. He felt bereaved and asked Sri Aurobindo why such a lovely flower had faded away even before blossoming. Sri Aurobindo replied:

"Uma Bose had reached a stage of her development marked by a predominance of *sattwic* nature, but not a strong vital (which works towards a successful or fortunate life) or the opening to a higher light—her mental upbringing and surroundings stood against that and she herself was not ready. The early death and much suffering may have been the result of past (prenatal) influences or they may have been chosen by her own psychic being as a passage towards a higher state for which she was not yet prepared but towards which she was moving. This and the non-fulfilment of her capacities could be a final tragedy if there were this life alone. As it is, she has passed towards the psychic sleep to prepare for her life to come."

PLAYGROUND MEDITATION*

GOD Truth Spirit Unity Immortality—
Reality or Appearance, Permanent or Impermanent?
Words of love, of compassion comfort and solace
Of liberty equality and fraternity
Inspirers of the good the true the beautiful
Cause of many a faith many a cult and credo
Of endless debates division and strife
Hypocrisy repression and retribution
Words once sprung from the very deeps of the human heart
Now irrevocable by the human will!
Words whose undying Illumination
Have fired and inspired the imagination
Of mighty minds from time immemorial
Words that shall brighten Earth's face in the time to come
Though periodically men may shun the beater track
And Earth herself go astray;
Yet, words from whose redoubtable presence
I vainly try to shy away!

For the mind is diffident and wary
And the obstinate self keeps fleeing
Searching for a nook to rest in
But where's the resting place
When the Self-within-the-self
Tracks it down
Yoking it back to the age-old object of contemplation?

Even as the drama repeats
And the habitual struggle goes on
Phosphorescent memories of youthful days
Gleam about the sombre vault of being
Like fireflies on a dark stilly night
Remote harmonies from distant reaches
Rock the brain to a semi-conscious delight

But a happier scene disturbs the depths:
As the night presses close upon us
And the inner flames grow bright

* Recast version (1st July 1993) of a poem originally published in *Mother India*, December 1966

And the roar of the sea comes muffled
 And the winds blow soft and soothing
 And the spaces teem with whispers
 From yonder mystic fields
 And ill-formed ideas and confused desires
 Swish against the sealed doors of the soul
 (Like tragic moths against fluorescent lights)
 And music tells of births long ago, of worlds long forgotten—
 Whatever their failings, whatever their strivings
 Whatever the fever of their cravings—
 To see so many people sitting around The Mother's Chair—
 Calm, indrawn
 Asking, receiving
 Aspiring to outgrow their meaner selves—
 Seems a sight more wonderful and intriguing
 Than the sky and the moon and the stars,
 Though always on them I gaze
 Seems a sight more wonderful and intriguing
 Than the sky and the moon and the stars
 Though always on them I gaze
 Dazed by these ever-enchanting mysteries
 Of evanescent eternities!

BIBHAS JYOTI MUTSUDDI

JESUS CHRIST AND THE PSYCHIC REALISATION

“The Truth of truths men fear and deny,
The Light of lights they refuse;
To ignorant gods they lift their cry
Or a demon altar choose.”

SRI AUROBINDO

THIS is how we have marched blundering through the ages, the blind leading the blind. Our greatest vice has been ignorance; ignorance of the true laws that govern our life. We would have fallen into the abyss long ago if it had not been for certain beings who grace our earth from time to time and lead us on towards the Light. One such being was Jesus Christ. He was little understood by the world, and even today his message falls on ears that do not hear. Some ‘believers’ accept him only with his miracles, and others accept him only as a moralist and a humanitarian, whilst the ‘modern man’ with his ‘rational mind’ doubts the very existence of Jesus. Unfortunately, “Many are the Thyrsus-bearers but few are the mystics.”

His moral teaching has been well explained by various writers, but they have failed to emphasise the fact that he is essentially a spiritual figure and not a moralist. He is no doubt a great moral force, but he is a greater spiritual force.

Spiritual experiences and realisations are many and varied; the one, however, with which we are primarily concerned in dealing with Jesus is the realisation of the godhead within, the soul in man, because according to him this is the realisation which leads one to the Divine Father.

Jesus Christ in the Gospels stands before us as the personification of this soul-realisation; through his own spiritual growth he typifies in the earth-nature the main characteristics of the action of the soul in its effort to develop and convert the natural being into the spiritual being.

A superficial glance at the Gospels may lead one to suppose that the essence of his teaching is crystallised in one golden precept, “Love thy neighbour as thyself.” No doubt, this is part of his teaching, he is a messenger of love; but, as we shall see, the soul-realisation is the pivot round which his whole teaching revolves, and his message of love as well as his moralising are a necessary consequence of his soul-birth, or new-birth, into the Divine Consciousness. He speaks through the heart, but it is the soul behind that acts and makes itself heard through the heart.

In order to have a fuller understanding of his teaching and to grasp the true significance of this soul-birth, we shall be well advised to go to one who today stands out as the master of Yoga, Sri Aurobindo. The many-sidedness, completeness and integrality of his spiritual experience as well as his realisation of both the static and the dynamic side of the Spirit give him the highest place

among spiritual figures. Even in the strictly mental field he is not only the High Priest of Yoga but also its Scientist. He has given us a graphic metaphysico-psychological statement of the Spiritual Reality. So we shall try to understand what Sri Aurobindo has to say about spirituality in general and the psychic realisation in particular. Our object here is not to prove this or that "so that the Scriptures may be fulfilled" or to interpret the Gospels, but to turn the beams of the Aurobindonian light on the prophet who preached in parables two thousand years ago.

Sri Aurobindo explains in *The Life Divine* what the soul is and how it works in man: "The true soul secret in us... burns in the temple of the inmost heart behind the thick screen of an ignorant mind, life and body,... this veiled psychic entity is the name of the Godhead always alight within us.... It is the secret Witness and Control, the hidden Guide, the Daemon of Socrates, the inner light or inner voice of the mystic. It is that which endures and is imperishable in us from birth to birth.... Not the unborn Self or Atman .. it is yet its deputy in the forms of Nature, the individual soul, *chaitya purusha*.... It is this secret psychic entity which is the true original Conscience in us deeper than the constructed and conventional conscience of the moralist..."

It is this soul which forever makes man stretch out of himself into the Infinite; it is this which spurs him on to a more glorious life and always leads him towards Love, Truth, Good and Beauty and, as it evolves, towards the Divine whose eternal part it is. It makes its demands felt through the heart and the mind, and is the secret cause of man's lofty ideals and aspirations, his altruistic endeavours and his search for his lost godhead.

The soul is at first an undifferentiated luminous stuff of the Divine Consciousness projected into the material world; as it grows and evolves through various lives it develops a psychic personality of itself—the psychic being. There is a hidden urge in the soul to gather experience and evolve and finally to come forward and govern man's whole personality. This urge makes every aspiring man search within himself for the divine and immortal part of his being. After discovering it he learns to live in its consciousness—the Psychic Consciousness. Finally, the psychic being comes to the front and rules the entire personality. Then he knows his 'true individuality' which is always in contact with the Divine, and learns to distinguish it from his narrow ego-centric surface-personality. Or as Sri Aurobindo says, "The psychic being at first exercises only a concealed and indirect action through the mind, the life and the body. It should come forward on the surface and govern overtly and entirely and not from behind the veil of our outer nature of mind, life and body."

A person in whom the psychic being is beginning to come forward, gradually loses his ego-sense and begins to realise his oneness with the Divine, and through Him his identity with all other creatures who are also, like him, eternal portions of the Divine. This is the truth underlying the precept given by Jesus: "Love thy neighbour as thyself."

Secondly, all the formations of his dark mental-vital-physical nature are exposed to and purified by the psychic light which is directly aware of truth of being and truth of nature. It is also directly aware of all that is true, good and beautiful because truth, good and beauty are akin to its own nature, and is intensely conscious of all that is a denial and a negation of these.

In the following lines Sri Aurobindo explains in detail the influence of the psychic being on the total personality when it comes forward and becomes its guide and ruler: "... a psychic sympathy and unity and inner communication and interchanges of all kinds with other beings and with Nature, illuminations of the mind by knowledge, illuminations of the heart by love and devotion and spiritual joy and ecstasy, illuminations of the sense and the body by higher experience, illuminations of dynamic action in the truth and largeness of a purified mind and heart and soul, the certitudes of the divine light and guidance, the joy and power of the divine force working in the will and the conduct. These experiences are the result of an opening outward of the inner and inmost being and nature; for then there comes into play the soul's power of unerring inherent consciousness, its vision, its touch on things which is superior to any mental cognition; there is there, native to the psychic consciousness in its pure working, an immediate sense of the world and its beings, a direct inner contact with them and a direct contact with the Self and with the Divine,—a direct knowledge, a direct sight of Truth and of all truths, a direct penetrating spiritual emotion and feeling, a direct intuition of right will and right action, a power to rule and to create an order of the being not by gropings of the superficial self, but from within, from the inner truth of self and things and the occult realities of Nature."

Now in the light of this knowledge we shall try to understand the teaching of Jesus.

First, let us take his instruction to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee: Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." This may be explained as—unless a man goes behind the layer of his surface-consciousness, learns to live in the psychic consciousness, and identifies himself with his true individual self, the soul in him, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Evidently, Jesus here refers to the soul-birth, the psychic new-birth as distinguished from the physical birth. All through his preaching he appeals to his followers to find the soul within. "For behold, the kingdom of God is within you." He tries to make them understand that the means to reach the kingdom of God is not outside of them but within themselves. The key to open the gates of the spiritual kingdom is the psychic new-birth which will lead them to the Divine Father.

We shall now come to that famous utterance which has been misunderstood and misinterpreted by both the Church and the humanitarians: "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." The clergymen have interpreted this to mean that only Christians can go to Heaven and reach God; the Non-Christians have to fall into the dark abyss of Hell. Only

ignorance of spiritual truths could have led to such a misrepresentation of facts.

Between the Christian Fathers and the moralising rationalists the teaching of Jesus has been greatly mutilated. Some interpreters of the Gospels have tried to inject morality into all that he has preached with the result that they have divested him of his spirituality and have brought him down to their own level. This 'humanising' of Jesus has been widely acclaimed as a great achievement. On the other hand the Church, unable to distinguish between allegory and fact, has tried to impose its rigid dogmas and theological doctrines on its followers, thereby making the Apostles of Reason rebel against it. In the midst of this confusion of 'religiosity', rationalism and humanitarianism, the voice of Jesus is drowned and his message is not heard.

Coming back to his saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life,.. " we can say that the way is the way of the psychic new-birth. Jesus is conscious of his oneness with his Father because he has grown into the Divine Consciousness through his new-birth, and as he is the living embodiment of this truth he says, "I am the truth." The life is the true inner life, the spiritual life, not the gross outer life of the mental-vital-physical being. The word life is used in the same sense when he says, "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." The Father in Heaven is the Living Presence of the Divine enthroned in the inmost heart of every man, the Indweller—who also transcends all manifestation and all that is; not an extra-cosmic Creator with a balance in his hands whose main occupation is to reward the virtuous and punish the wicked.

Jesus does not want his disciples to be merely religious; he wants them to become truly spiritual by experiencing the psychic realisation. The Pharisees who pray in the synagogues are religious. The true worship of God is the inner worship; this should not be mistaken for a mental attitude that gives assent to theological doctrines. It is a seeking to be one with the Divine Being, reaching the Godhead above through the Godhead within. The outer husk of this true worship is called religion. Religion has its use during a certain stage of evolution, but as man strides ahead through Time he has to shed all these outer forms like serpent-scales and embrace the Inner Reality. "But when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to the Father which is in secret." "God is a Spirit and those that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Every religion has for its source a spiritual experience and as long as it makes this its primary aim it remains virile and effective; but when it dwindles down into humanitarianism and ethics or when it gets distorted into a worship of outer forms, it loses its essential truth and fades away into a shadow of its former self. When a religion does not aim at spiritual experience it cannot last, for it gets severed from the fountain-head from which it must draw its life and strength.

Before we go further let us try to understand in greater detail what

spirituality is. In *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo writes, "It must therefore be emphasised that spirituality is not a high intellectuality, not idealism, not an ethical turn of mind or moral purity and austerity, not religiosity or an ardent and exalted emotional fervour, not even a compound of all these excellent things; a mental belief, creed or faith, an emotional aspiration, a regulation of conduct according to a religious or ethical formula are not spiritual achievement and experience. These things are of considerable value to mind and life; they are of value to the spiritual evolution itself... but they still belong to the mental evolution.... Spirituality is in its essence an awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, self, soul which is other than our mind, life and body, an inner aspiration to know, to feel, to be that, to enter into contact with the greater Reality beyond and pervading the universe which inhabits also our own being, to be in communion with It, and a turning, a conversion, a transformation of our whole being as a result of the aspiration, the contact, the union, a growth or waking into a new becoming or new being, a new self, a new nature."

It is obvious that by spirituality Sri Aurobindo means much more than Jesus does. The latter wants to give men an inner awakening, and to make them conscious of the existence of the kingdom of the spirit within. He wants his followers to lead their lives by listening to the guidance of the Inner Light which is in direct contact with the Divine Father. Whilst this is the aim of Jesus, the goal of most of the Yogis in India has been to immerse themselves in the Silent and Immobile Absolute, or to reach the Godhead above in a superconscious trance and sometimes to lead their outer life in the light of the illumination received from above.

Such is not the goal of Sri Aurobindo. The psychic being has come into Nature from the Self, the Divine and can turn back from Nature to the silent and static aspect of the Divine. But according to him this can only be a great achievement as a 'spiritual self-finding'. It can never be the final term of the consummation of man's existence; for the psychic being has descended into Nature to lead it to its divine fulfilment and not to abandon it and withdraw itself into the silence of the Static Absolute. Consequently, his goal is not spiritual attainment only; he wants to bring down the Light and Force of the 'Truth-Consciousness' of the Divine which he calls the Supermind into our earth-field with the object of transforming our nature-parts into their divine equivalents, the archetypes which already exist in the Supermind. Our dark earth-nature has to be divinisised by the transfiguring Light and Force of Super-nature.

All great mystics have certain basic realisations. If two mystics have the same realisation, they will both be aware of the same aspect of the Supreme Reality, for "spiritual truth is a truth of being and consciousness and not a truth of thought" which is always open to error. But when these mystics will try to interpret that particular realisation in the language of the mind they may do so in different ways, each according to his own mental mould and development. This

is the reason why the same spiritual truth is so often expressed in various ways by different mystics

The spiritual development of Jesus is much greater than his mental development, but owing to his spiritual illumination he transcends his mental limitations to a great extent. Nevertheless, like every other man he inherits through his nature-parts some of the habits and prejudices of his race—he partakes of his race-consciousness. The Jews of his time, whatever their religious imaginativeness, were insufficiently developed in intellect. There was little philosophical bent—the lucid systematising faculty was wanting. Even the intuitive ordering and connecting of concepts into a luminous scheme was rarely displayed. Jesus is a yogi, but instead of the background of the Vedanta he has that of the Old Testament. Hence his spiritual teaching is tinged with Judaism. Like other yogis he has to translate his visions and realisations in the language of the mind. His mind has to interpret in its own forms truths which he has attained in his spiritual experiences. In his case the difficulty is greater as he has to teach people whose minds are unreceptive to so exalted a teaching.

He does not give his followers a philosophical or ethical system but teaches them mostly in parables. Syllogistic reasoning is not the only mode of imparting knowledge. It can be imparted through allegories and parables too. Plato's "Allegory of the Den" and the Parables of Jesus instruct us more than the long-winding systems of some of the philosophers. The minds of ordinary people can get kindled like candles by the living torch of an illumined mind. But Jesus is not an ordinary yogi. He is acutely conscious of his mission and of his own divinity. Hence he says, "To this end was I born and for this cause came I unto the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." We shall have occasion to discuss his divine origin in greater detail later on.

Coming back to his teaching, we find that it is not his intention to give men moral precepts. He says, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." These commandments are the rules of conduct taught by men; Jesus does not want his disciples to follow these but to listen to the inner Divine Guidance. Often, the 'voice of conscience' is mistaken for the true inner voice. The true conscience is the soul seated deep within us behind the conventional conscience of the moralist. Generally men are guided by what Sri Aurobindo calls the "surface desire-soul". This is a cloudy formation of our surface-consciousness made up of emotional sentimentalisms, vital urges and cravings (both gross and subtilised) interpenetrated by mental idealisms and sometimes influenced from behind by the psychic being.

Often virtue is mistaken for spirituality, whereas actually virtue is only moral excellence. It may be a necessary condition of spirituality to a very large extent, but by itself it cannot lead a person to the Divine. Moral excellence is a product of the mental-vital-physical formations of our ignorant surface-personality with a psychic drive from behind the veil. But to reach the Divine an inner

cleansing is necessary. "Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and the platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."

To understand clearly what this inner cleansing means we shall have to study briefly the psychological structure of our being. First we have the outer mental-vital-physical consciousness held together by the Ego which centralises and individualises it. This Ego has no fundamental reality of its own; it is the outer mask of our being. When we go within we become aware of an inner mental, vital, subtle-physical being behind the mental-vital-physical outer consciousness. This is our subliminal self. It is "the meeting place of the consciousness that emerges from below by evolution and the consciousness that has descended from above for involution"

Then we come to the subconscious part of our being. This 'Subconscient' layer lies midway between our waking surface-consciousness and the dark lower inconscient abyss of our being. Its workings are also not known to the surface self. Its consciousness is obscure and narrow and not luminous and wide like the ranges of the subliminal.

The inmost soul and the psychic being it puts forth have already been described.

Just as we have a region of darkness in the hidden ranges of our being, so also we have a realm of light there, which may be called the superconscient part of our total being. These are the higher planes of spiritual consciousness to which we have to ascend.

We can now say that to effect an inner cleansing we have to go behind the veil of the surface-consciousness and working from an inner centre break up and dissolve the existing mental-vital-physical formations which lead us away from the Divine, and create new formations. After doing this one really becomes pure. This can most effectively be done when the psychic being becomes the central guiding-light of the total personality. Of course, all this does not seem to be formulated in detail in the mind of Jesus, but it seems clear that he is aware of the possibility of the soul coming forward and governing the entire being.

Another saying of Jesus which has been a little misunderstood is: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" Here he wants to impress upon his followers the necessity of simplicity. It is the simplicity and innocence of the children that appeals to him and not the arrogance and worldliness of the elders. Also, it seems that he has in mind the psychic new-birth; for the main characteristic of a person who has had this new-birth is to look upon himself as the child of the Divine.

The next question before us is, "Who is Jesus Christ and what is his spiritual status?" People have offered various answers; some think that he is a mystic like Plotinus, but much greater; others consider him to be only a moralist and a humanitarian, whilst those who have not drunk deep of the 'Pierian spring' think that he is a man with a 'mission-complex'. There are again many who think that

he is an Avatar, which seems to be an accurate evaluation. Let us examine who an Avatar is and what he does when he comes to the earth. First and foremost he is a descent of the Divine in human form. This has led people to believe that if the Divine who is omnipotent takes the form of a human being he should remove suffering and sorrow and change the world by working a miracle and make everyone happy and prosperous. If he does not do that they have doubts about his divinity. Fortunately the Avatar does not toil on earth to gain the applause of mankind or to satisfy the demands of the rationalists.

The phenomenon of Avatarhood is not so simple. It has a dual aspect. There is the Divine Presence behind supporting and guiding, and the Instrumental Personality in front working in earth-nature under the conditions of the Ignorance. However powerful the Avatar may be he has to work under certain conditions which have been laid down. He does not wave them aside and work arbitrarily, for his function is to accept the existing terrestrial conditions, conquer them and make a particular kind of spiritual development possible which was hitherto not possible.

The Avatar is no stranger who has accidentally wandered into the earth-field; he is no freak who does supernormal yogic feats or miracles before a gaping multitude. He has a work to do, a task to perform—and this work is part of the Divine Plan. He links through his own spiritual development the different stages of the evolutionary ascent of mankind from the dark Night of Inconscience to the light of a New Day.

In his *Essays on the Gita* Sri Aurobindo writes, “The Avatar does not descend merely for a great outward action, as the pragmatic sense in humanity is too often tempted to suppose.... The crisis in which the Avatar appears, though apparent to the outward eye as a crisis of events and great material changes, is always in its source and inner meaning a crisis in the consciousness of humanity when it has to undergo some grand modification and effect some new development.” “The Avatar comes as the manifestation of the divine nature in the human nature, the apocalypse of its Christhood, Krishnahood, Buddhahood, in order that the human nature may, by moulding its principle, thought, feeling, action, being on the lines of that Christhood, Krishnahood, Buddhahood, transfigure itself into the divine. The law, the Dharma which the Avatar establishes is given for that purpose chiefly; the Christ, Krishna, Buddha stands in its centre as the gate, he makes through himself the way men shall follow, that is why each Incarnation holds before men his own example and declares of himself that he is the way and the gate; he declares too the oneness of his humanity with the divine being, declares that the Son of Man and the Father above from whom he has descended are one, that Krishna in the human body and the supreme Lord and Friend of all creatures are but two revelations of the same divine Purushottama, revealed there in his own being, revealed here in the type of humanity.”

This gives us a clear idea why Christ says, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." "For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." He is all the time conscious of his divine descent. He says, "Whither I go, ye cannot come.... Ye are from beneath; I am from above; Ye are of this world; I am not of this world."

Our sense-bound human mind is apt to pay more importance to the incidents in the outer life of an Avatar than to the facts of his inner life. It is the spiritual happenings in him that really matter. The world calls the Avatars glorious failures because it measures their achievements by the stunted yardstick of utilitarianism. This kind of valuation of an Avatar does not take into account his spiritual status or the work he does in the spiritual field.

In the inner field of life, he gives men a law of self-evolution and shows them the "way unto life", the spiritual life. He makes them conscious of their own divinity and of their oneness with the Supreme Being.

In the outer field of life, he gives them rules of action and of right relations with their fellow-men; and teaches them to have love, faith and purity. "Love thy neighbour as thyself." "Verily I say unto you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain: Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Jesus Christ is no longer in the world but his influence still vibrates in the inner consciousness of men; and his prayer can still be heard echoing through the ages.... "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.... And now, O Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."

S. R. ALBLESS

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THOUGHTS ON THE WAY

1

FEAR AND DISSATISFACTION

THE Mother has said, "No child of mine should ever be afraid." Fear is like a sharp sword with which we pierce our heart from the very moment our apprehension begins. It is like spreading bitter vapours of disturbed emotions which darken the very road we want to walk upon. These turbid signals invite and bring forth answering vibrations from the lower universal nature. It is like the barking of a dog whose refrain is picked up by all the other dogs in the vicinity disturbing the peace and repose of our life. Magnetlike our fears attract the very things we are afraid of. To fear is to send an open invitation to misfortune. The worst may sometimes be staved off due to our good Karma or the intervention of our guardian angels yet at the least our fears will have tortured us at the time they were with us.

We are as responsible for our mental states as for our physical. Do we allow, strange, cruel, uncouth, dirty, revengeful people in our homes? Of course not—we eject the intruders, even if need be by force. Then why should we allow all sorts of upsetting and vitiating thoughts—thoughts of defeat, hatred, lust and revenge to enter our being with their murky shadows.

If fear is a spear on which we impale ourselves, the hope is like a sturdy staff, a steady lamp on life's ways. It shields us from adversity, it helps us up the awesome slopes of life's many-ridged arduous ascent. Fears are like thorns that bloody our hands from the moment we pick them up. Hope and trust are like flowers that not only gladden and lighten our heart's burdens but also attract the support of the good fairies and fill our environment with helpful entities. For each Satanic Force out to destroy the good and the positive there is one Godly being around us—call it Chosen Deity or Guardian Angel. It is the smile of Divinity which has led our steps through the millennial journey of our soul. Our fears and apprehensions effectively shut our gates against the heavenly helpers. And another strong destroyer, a staunch ally of death and decay, is the habit of grumbling. I asked a chronic grumbler why he always belittled things, why he found fault and shot wisecracks at events, circumstances, men and Gods alike. I am sure, were he to gain entry into Heaven he would find it quite imperfect and the Gods foolish. He answered in a candid self-introspective moment, "There is a sort of satisfaction in grumbling."

Yet, it is a sort of cowardly, lonely, self-destructive satisfaction. It is rank ingratitude towards the Divine. When we have a sound body, tolerable circumstances, a world made beautiful with the sun, moon, stars, hills, rivers and oceans, then by grumbling at inconvenience we invoke the Furies of Hell. The

Mother remarked that grumbling opens us to all kinds of things and forces. When we grumble—first we lose the joy of the thing or the event which we would have enjoyed had we taken an appreciative instead of critical view. Then in case there is some real difficulty, for life is full of uneven patches, by grumbling we shut our doors against the Divine Help which could and might have removed the cause of our irritation if it thought intervention was needed and the affront against us was not simply in our imagination, or was for our good, for to develop our will we need to spar with mighty opponents.

Life will smile at us if we can smile at life. So said the Mother. Delight shall be ours if we can overlook the minor imperfections in others. Creation is not a perfect ship inside a bottle, it is a keel laid out in open space. One day its pennants will touch the Empyrean but till then let us have patience with ourselves and our fellow beings. God is neither a mere name, nor is He sleeping. All will be done and explained one day.

2

PROBLEMS AND MISFORTUNES

Difficulties are the ridges on the upward route of life. The wise traveller skirts around them to find—if necessary, to force—a path howsoever narrow or uncomfortable, to proceed further for scaling the heights beyond. But most of us fools try to level the hills. We are fatally fascinated by problems. Like a rabbit mesmerized by a python's stare we almost gladly offer ourselves to the predator misfortune—while beyond the pass the welcome arches of joy await us, alas, in vain.

This unnatural but common trait aggravates our failures and misfortunes. By a herculean effort we might level a small hill but in the process we waste our precious life-time and miss our Eldorado. The secret of happy survival lies in avoiding the gaze of the python, the eye of the hurricane, in ignoring as far as possible the ugly, the irritating, the unpleasant, in not strengthening them by paying them too much court, too much attention. People describe almost with a holy reverence in sickening detail the illnesses they suffered long ago or the blows life dealt them in the past. They relive their agonies many times over and suffer needlessly. During life's journey, to compensate for each traveller who has been unpleasant, there are two who shared their food with us, helped us, even risked their lives.

Ungrateful that we are, we do not treasure the unexpected boons life brought us, the good turn somebody did. Let us postpone reading or at least re-reading the debit side of the past's ledger. The Present is waiting like an eager beloved. Let us make friends with life's wonders and shun the memory of its disasters. Let us bring out of the casket of Time the priceless gems of simple

goodness, fellow-feeling, kindness, that we have received from men and Gods, and make much of them. In their glow, the hatreds, defeats and misfortunes will scuttle away to hide like the creatures of the dark that they are. Don't we seek the company of the good and the helpful and assiduously ignore and avoid those who give us pain? Why not adopt the same attitude towards circumstances and problems? The unwelcome should be met with indifference. Thus their sting will lose half its poison.

For delight is the source of creation. God created the world out of Ananda. Being in hell is all the more reason to cry out to and invoke the heavens. If demons pursue us it is wisdom to take shelter under the wings of our guardian angel and—make no mistake—each one of us has one. When a million rainbows await us why mourn the greyness? Instead let us light the candles of Hope and Trust and walk safe through the wilderness.

Our life is a feast laid out for us by the Lord. Why wait for the left-overs at the back-door? Walk boldly to the head of the table and take a seat. For each one is the king, the Chief Guest of his life and Master of its moments and circumstances. Only we have forgotten our royalty. Let us take up the sceptre and wear the crown of our Soul.

SHYAM KUMARI

INDIAN ECONOMY—PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

THERE are three basic issues pertaining to the Indian economy that need to be examined. They are interrelated. These are: Oil imports, Price instability and Population. Existing theories of development economics do not adequately cover the first two

OIL IMPORTS

Foreign Exchange Requirements

This single item sets the agenda for the total economic policy. We produce only about half the quantity of oil that we require at present. The answer to the question “Do we wish to import oil?” decides the issue. If the answer is “Yes”, the rest of the policy follows like a series of ‘forced’ chess moves. We have to pay for the oil in foreign currency. To earn the foreign exchange, we have to trade. To trade, we have to be seen as willing to meet our obligations—which means we cannot renege on our interest and loan payments. This increases the foreign exchange requirements. We do not earn this total requirement. Not counting defence imports, this year, as against a requirement of \$ 14.5 bn, the net exports amount to only \$ 11 bn. The difference can be acquired only through loans, mostly from the IMF. The funding of the IMF is substantially controlled by the USA. There remains no choice other than accepting the conditionalities that go with such dependence. Put bluntly, this means we have not only to accept the IMF conditionalities, but also any policies imposed by the USA with regard to MTCR, NPT, TRIPS and so on.

This aspect is unfortunately mused out by critics of the present economic policy who bemoan what they perceive as loss of sovereignty. The only alternative is to decide to slash the oil imports by half. The implications of this are not difficult to imagine. The critics must, however, come out with an explicit statement of alternative policies to be then followed, with specific reference to transportation and other energy requirements.

Unfortunately, current economic theory treats Oil as just one of the commodities, which is not accurate. At a pinch, we may be able to do away with most of our imports, causing only a gradual hardship. Effects of stopping oil imports would be far more drastic, affecting immediately the day-to-day living.

Vulnerability

The previous paragraphs also bring out the extreme vulnerability of the Indian economy. The BOP crisis was caused by the oil shock due to the Gulf War. Had there been no dependency on oil imports, the BOP crisis could have

been avoided. In fact it was not a shock—only a hiccup. Should there be another “Desert Storm”, a price increase by OPEC, failure of two successive monsoons forcing diversion of foreign exchange to import of food grains, the economy can easily go into a tail-spin.

Dependency on oil imports has therefore to be reduced. It would require exploration and development of our own oil reserves, switching to coal-gas and alcohol based modes of transportation, and active development and use of other alternate sources of energy. This action should have been taken immediately after the first oil-shock more than twenty years ago. There is, unfortunately, no short-term solution.

PRICE INSTABILITY

As trade barriers crumble, prices tend to equalize. On account of sheer volume, they are set by the spenders in Developed Countries. The ‘Standard of Living’ as commonly understood can be expressed by the relationship that prices bear to the daily wages.

Wages are generally proportional to productivity. If currencies are properly valued and matched at the correct rates of exchange, a worker in a Developing Country, producing one unit per day can only be paid a sixth of what a worker in a Developed Country, producing six units a day, would be paid.

In a Developing Country, with low productivity of the labour, this would result in the prices being much higher in terms of daily wages, as is now happening in India. A recent example is the Indian Airline’s claim in justification of the increase in air-fares that the air-fares in India are lower than those in the West. There is no comparison offered for productivity and operational efficiency. Just as the fare increase has now made air travel beyond the reach of a large number of people to whom it had previously been affordable, the increase in prices would shift larger and larger number of items and services beyond affordability. The organised labour sector would insist on a restoration of purchasing power. This would result in a continuous price instability, the unorganised sector suffering the most.

POPULATION

There is a built-in time lag between implementation of population control measures and the stabilisation of population. This is usually of the order of two generations—or fifty years. This means that even if every couple in India, commencing today, has only two children, our population is already set to inexorably double over the next thirty-five years and exceed two thousand million within fifty years. This will put a tremendous strain on the economy. The rate of population increase retards the ‘per-capita’ rate of economic growth.

Health care, education etc., even at the present unsatisfactory levels, would claim a greater share of resources. On account of limitations of land and need for increased food production, fertilisers would claim a greater share of scarce foreign exchange.

There is, once again, no immediate solution to this. Awareness of the existence of the problem, even amongst the literate elite, is lacking. China faces a similar problem and has commenced to solve it with a vigorous 'one-child per couple' norm. In India, limitations of the political horizon seem to have relegated this severe problem to the background. Sadly, effective population control may only be implemented at a future date if it forms part of the conditionalities when we go for a survival loan some day!

CONCLUSION

The preceding paragraphs paint a grim but realistic picture of the situation. Oil imports necessitate foreign exchange. Adequate amount of exchange is not forthcoming through low-tech items such as textiles, tea etc. Building up hi-tech high value exports is a slow and uphill task. This is rendered difficult by low labour productivity. The currency will be under constant inflationary pressure. Effective development is retarded by inexorable population growth. The first inescapable step towards solving a problem is to identify it. Having done this, it now requires remedial measures that extend beyond the normal political horizon of five years.

ANIL DABIR

REMEMBER ME

REMEMBER, my child, I am always with you, deep in your soul,
At all hours, remember, I watch over your life and progress,
With love and care and guide your uncertain steps.
Remember me wherever you may be in the world.
Repeat my name whenever you have a little time to spare.
I am present everywhere. To see and feel my Presence,
My child, you have only to switch on the inner Light.
I am inside you, outside you, above and below.
You can feel my Love with only a little warmth
On your side. Remember, I never abandon you even
When you go out of the happy sunlit path.
Remember my Love always, I never scold or punish,
That is not my way. I am pouring my love in your heart
Day and night. Remember, I am your Mother, Father,
Counsellor and Queen. Remember me always
For I am your closest, faithful and dearest Friend.
Hide nothing from me. Depend on me for all your needs.
Remember you are my child, I can never be ashamed of you,
Whatever you do, remember me, I shall give you sunshine,
Laughter and joy in life which no one can take away from you.
In spite of your thousand mistakes, hold on to me, remember,
My child can never fail Tell me all your plans and dreams.
I am always with you. Remember, I love and protect you.
Remember me when afraid, no one can do any harm to you.
I want you to be really good, always happy, my child.
Remember, I live in the heart of all living beings, human and animal.
When you are kind to anyone, remember you are kind to me.
Be generous as the ocean, fill the world with good thoughts and feelings.
Be straight and simple, remember me always without fail.
Enter your heart to know what I like, remember never to tell a lie.
I shall put within your reach all that is noble and beautiful.
Have the utmost goodwill for all, remember all are my children.
Remember me for any help for I am always with you day and night.
Remember, my child, your life is worth living only in the service divine.

NIRANJAN GUHA ROY

CELEBRATION OF LIFE

WHEREVER the glance,
Golden light's beatific dance!
The senses are bright
With a calm delight,
A mother Beatitude
Dawning from on high is viewed,
An ever-expanding horizon's line
Caresses the superhuman shine,
Streaming across heart's valley
Golden innocence laughs gaily.
The winds suddenly turn eloquent
Announcing the hour of upliftment
To every listening bud and every drifting cloud,
Revealing their quiet surprises from mystery's shroud;
They are not the winds of yesterday
Huddled helplessly in the humdrum play,
From the far-off silver seas they have come
Some sweet celestial tune they gladly hum,
Possessing puissant wings and lofty dreams
They are effusive like the seaward streams.
Calm-bosomed fields no longer sleep,
The hills and dales seem ever to leap,
The lively expanse with all its glory
Suddenly merges in me as if in a hurry.
The gods have come and can return no more,
Bound by love they have entered the earth's core.

SEIKH ABDUL KASAM

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of 24 November 1993)

THE Surat Congress was scheduled to begin on 26 December, 1907.

Before leaving Calcutta for Surat, Sri Aurobindo wrote in the *Bande Mataram*: “We must go... as pilgrims travelling to our Mother’s temple. We have a great work to do and cannot afford to be negligent and half-hearted. Be sure that this year 1907 is a turning-point of our destinies, and do not imagine that the session of the Surat Congress will be as the sessions of other years. Let us fear to miss by absenting ourselves the chance of helping to put in one of the keystones of the house we are building for our Mother’s dwelling in the future, the house of her salvation, the house of Swaraj.”¹

It was evident that Sri Aurobindo went to Surat with a spiritual motive rather than a political motive and told his fellow nationalists that compromise between the Extremists and the Moderates was unthinkable on certain issues, especially on the question of Swaraj.

Some days before the Congress Session the historic town was agog with excitement, rumours, confabulations and parallel war councils. The rival parties were busy to strengthen their own respective groups. The important figureheads of both the parties were present there. The Moderates had a major support in Surat itself. But it was expected that more local people might join with them. The Nationalists too were by no means weak so that they would lose heart from the beginning. But it was difficult to say which way the political wind would blow.

In the Moderate Camp Mehta was a dominant force. Gokhale was intellectually a most distinguished personality and Surendra Nath was the counterpoise to the strongest Extremists’ contingent from Bengal. With Rash Behari Ghosh as the President-elect, Sir Pherozshah Mehta wanted completely to break down Nationalism. As Sri Aurobindo put it, “When Sir Pherozshah Mehta juggled the Congress into Surat, he thought he was preparing a death-blow for Nationalism; he was only preparing the way for a Nationalist awakening in Gujerat.”²

Sri Aurobindo observed the ill motive of Sir Pherozshah which would surely fail. He gave the reason for its failure:

“Nationalism depends for its success on the awakening and organising of the whole strength of the Nation; it is therefore vitally important for Nationalism that the politically backward classes should be awakened and brought into the current of political life.”³

In the Extremist Camp, there was Lajpat Rai, recently released from deportation. Sri Aurobindo was there—who appeared perfectly calm on the eve of the storm; Tilak was there. There was none to surpass him at that time in his “oak-like massiveness and stature”. Tilak was the main figure in Surat’s

Congress. Sri Aurobindo, in an introduction he contributed in 1918 to *Speeches and Writings of Tilak*, divided the Lokomanya's active life into three periods. He was born at Ratnagiri in the year of the Mutiny: 1857. He commenced his life as a Teacher at Poona and founded the *Keshari* in Marathi and the *Mahratta* in English. During the first period, 1880 to 1890, he was prosecuted for defamation and had to spend four miserable months in jail, prison life-conditions at that time being atrocious. He withdrew from the Deccan Education Society in 1890 and, during the second period 1890-1906, he brought about the political awakening of Maharashtra. He organised the Ganapati festival in 1893 which in course of time played an important part in promoting a sense of unity among all Indian castes and in advancing the political education of the masses. Like Sri Aurobindo, Tilak had an affinity with the Revolutionaries and, again like Sri Aurobindo, he tried to promote civil agitation, keeping it separate from revolutionary activity. In his biography G.P. Pradhan and A.K. Bhagwat state:

“As a leader... it was his responsibility to see that all efforts for achieving freedom were carried on in the correct manner and he therefore gave advice to the leaders of the revolutionary wings. He did not want the decision of the opportune moment to be entrusted to a less mature person. . He thought that only Sri Aurobindo and himself could take such a momentous decision. He knew that a revolutionary action was too serious a matter to be decided by anyone except those who attain a philosophical calm of mind.” According to Sri Aurobindo, “He is the very type and incarnation of the Mahratta character, the Maratha qualities, the Maratha spirit, but with the unified solidity in the character, the touch of genius in the qualities, the vital force in the spirit which make a great personality, readily the representative man of his people.”⁴

At Surat the rival parties were accommodated in separate camps. Though apparently they looked peaceful, in reality there was a suspense and hostility among them. Each party tried by legitimate and illegitimate means to increase the numbers of the delegates.

“The sharp difference of opinion over the selection of the President continued. The extremists suggested that Lajpat Rai... should be elected President to mark the country's indignation and protest against the unfair treatment accorded to him by the Government; but he was not acceptable to the Moderates who chose Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh for the post. The situation was saved by the patriotic action of Lajpat Rai who declined to be a mere pawn in a political game. But this showed the Extremists which way the wind blew, and their suspicions were further confirmed by the fact that the list of subjects likely to be taken up for discussion by the Surat Congress, officially published about ten days before the date of the Congress session, did not include Self-Government, Boycott and National Education.

“It was in this atmosphere that the Congress met at Surat. In order to understand properly what actually took place in the open Session of the

Congress, it is necessary to sketch the background against which the whole scene was enacted.”⁵

The Moderates prepared a draft for the new resolution which they intended to get passed at the Surat Congress. It defined the goal of the Congress as “the attainment by India of self-government similar to that enjoyed by the other members of the British empire”.⁶ The Moderates also added in the new constitution of the Congress that only those who accepted the new creed were eligible for becoming members of the Provincial Committee. So the Nationalist leaders apprehended not only that the resolutions of the Calcutta Congress would be dissolved but also that the Congress would be dominated by the majority of the Moderates’ party for years to come.

“The Congress was to meet on 26 December, but Tilak reached Surat on the morning of the 23rd. In a large meeting held on the same evening, he denounced such retrogressions as suicidal to the interests of the country and appealed to the Surat public to help the Nationalists in their endeavour to maintain at least the *status quo*, in respect of the resolution about Self-Government, Boycott, *Swadeshi*, and National Education.”⁷

“The first meeting of the Nationalists’ Conference was held on the 24th December in the afternoon. Babu Arvind Ghosh, of the *Bande Mataram* fame, presided. The meeting was not open to the public. Only those who paid the fee of Re. 1/- and signed the pledge of being Nationalists were admitted. There were more than a thousand persons present. On the motion of Mr. Khaparde of Amraoti Mr. Ghosh, being elected to the chair, observed that the object of the conference was to disseminate the gospel of Nationalism and that for that purpose the Nationalists must be prepared to make all sorts of sacrifice. For the purpose of pushing forward the work of Nationalism an organisation was necessary and hence this conference. It was the object of the conference to enforce the views of the Nationalists on the Indian National Congress and to make the Congress, which had hitherto been a body for the concentration of opinion, a body for the concentration of work. He then called upon Mr. B.G. Tilak to state in detail the object of the conference.”⁸

The intention of the Nationalists was not to break the Congress though some Nationalist leaders wanted to hold a separate meeting at Nagpur. “But Tilak sent a wire: ‘For God’s sake no split.’ ” The Nationalists wanted to have a reasonable compliance with the Moderates. But it did not mean to scuttle the four resolutions which were passed in the Calcutta Congress after so many details and discussions. And it was the “precise” point for resisting a clash between the two parties.

On the eve of December 25, the Nationalists held their party meeting. G.S. Khaparde has recorded in his diary: “There is great discipline in our party. In the afternoon we had our Nationalists’ Conference. Aurobindo Babu presided and Tilak made another masterly statement, clear and concise and yet full, such as he

alone can make.”⁹ There is also a vivid description of this meeting in Nevinson’s book, *Spirit of India*. Henry Nevinson, an English M.P. who travelled widely to get used to the pulse of the new life which he witnessed all over India, had a talk with Sri Aurobindo in Calcutta and saw him again at Surat. About Sri Aurobindo presiding over the meeting he writes: “Grave and silent—I think without saying a single word—Mr. Arvind Ghose took the chair, and sat unmoved, with far-off eyes, as one who gazes at futurity. In clear, short sentences without eloquence or passion, Mr. Tilak spoke till the stars shone out and someone kindled a lantern at his side.”¹⁰

Sri Aurobindo estimated that in the Moderates’ city, the Moderate Party “was able to bring in a crowd of so-called delegates up to the number of 1300 while the Nationalists were able by the same method to muster something over 1100...”

This was the historical background of the Surat Congress when it opened on 26th December.

Under these circumstances, says Nirodbaran, “The Nationalists were prepared to withdraw their opposition to Dr. Ghosh’s election as President, provided the Moderates did not try to overrule the Calcutta resolution on Swaraj, but no understanding could be reached.”¹¹

The Congress Session was resumed on December 27. Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh came with a big procession which was arranged by the Moderates and took the Presidential chair. Sri Aurobindo recounts the whole story of the Surat Congress:

“... The younger Nationalists, especially those from Maharashtra, were determined to prevent this by any means and it was decided by them to break the Congress if they could not swamp it; this decision was unknown to Tilak and the older leaders. But it was known to Sri Aurobindo. At the sessions Tilak went on to the platform to propose a resolution regarding the presidentship of the Congress; the President appointed by the Moderates refused to him the permission to speak, but Tilak insisted on his right and began to read his resolution and speak. There was a tremendous uproar, the young Gujerati volunteers lifted up chairs over the head of Tilak to beat him. At that the Mahrattas became furious, a Mahratta shoe came hurtling across the pavilion aimed at the President, Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh, and hit Surendranath Banerjee on the shoulder. The young Mahrattas in a body charged up to the platform, the Moderate leaders fled; after a short fight on the platform with chairs, the session broke up not to be resumed. The Moderate leaders decided to suspend the Congress and replace it by a national conference with a constitution and arrangement which would make it safe for their party. Meanwhile, Lajpat Rai came to Tilak and informed him that the Government had decided, if the Congress split, to crush the Extremists by the most ruthless repression. Tilak thought, and the events proved that he was right, that the country was not yet

ready to face successfully such a repression and he proposed to circumvent both the Moderate plan and the Government plan by the Nationalists joining the Conference and signing the statement of adhesion to the new constitution demanded by the Moderates. Sri Aurobindo and some other leaders were opposed to this submission; they did not believe that the Moderates would admit any Nationalists to their conference (and this proved to be the case) and they wanted the country to be asked to face the repression. Thus the Congress ceased for a time to exist; but the Moderate Conference was not a success and was attended only by small and always dwindling numbers. Sri Aurobindo had the hope that the country would be strong enough to face the repression, at least in Bengal and Maharashtra, where the enthusiasm had become intense and almost universal; but he thought also that even if there was a temporary collapse the repression would create a deep change in the hearts and minds of the people and the whole nation would swing over to Nationalism and the ideal of Independence. This actually happened and when Tilak returned from jail in Burma after six years, he was able in conjunction with Mrs. Besant not only to revive the Congress but to make it representative of a nation pledged to the Nationalist cause. The Moderate party shrank into a small body of liberals and even these finally subscribed to the ideal of complete independence."¹²

Sri Aurobindo divulged the secrets of the Surat Congress long afterwards in reply to a disciple's question:

"History very seldom records the things that were decisive but took place behind the veil; it records the show in front of the curtain. Very few people knew that it was I (without consulting Tilak) who gave the orders that led to the breaking up of the Congress and was responsible for the refusal to join the new-fangled Moderate convention which were the two decisive happenings at Surat."¹³

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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MOMENT...

MOMENT of meditation—depth unknown,
 It rises in the heart,
 Eyes dim, the body feels alone,
 Walls, windows, doors depart,
 And hovers only a ghost of space.
 Then a strange sound, an inmost everywhere,
 Begins and slowly wafts to fill
 Both body and soul until
 Nothing remains except one vast
 Sense of an all-sustaining Grace
 Stretching as if to ever-last.
 Plenary that heaven, rapt. world-bare—
 Yet gathers in it near, more near
 A promise of new outwardness
 In which the waking eyes shall cast
 A lustre with a power to bless
 Even dust and stanch time's ancient tear.

DIMENSIONS OF INDIAN PROSE IN ENGLISH

(Continued from the issue of 24 November 1993)

If our religious prose marks the summit of our achievement, our journalistic prose, with its thinness of intellectual and emotional context, has undergone a steady degeneration. What was a vocation during the days of the freedom struggle has become a lucrative profession. Moral courage was once the forte of the Indian journalist; now what is usefully lacking is character. The craftman's excellence and the crusader's zeal have been replaced by selfishness and interest in immediate and narrow gains. M. Chalapati Rau, acknowledged to have established the highest norms in journalism, could write on the disciples of Gandhi and Nehru with candour and conviction.

The problem of India is the problem of poverty and the degradation that goes with it. Yet how many of those who laid floral wreaths on Gandhi's bier were willing to admit this truth and act up to it!... For if those who sought to revere Gandhi after his death realized how much they had pained him during his lifetime, they would see the hypocrisy of insincere homage. The mood of penitence soon changed into exploitation of Gandhi's memory. The vested interests which sought to take refuge under his non-violence sought to take refuge under his name. Gandhi's life and death seemed vain as voluntary dispossession of vested interests did not follow the mood of shrift.

When the writers of his time invited political leaders though of the calibre of Nehru and Radhakrishnan to the Chidambaram session of P.E.N., the journalist N. Raghunathan had the courage to write a piece entitled "Poets and Public Personalities" beginning with the bold remark:

If they held a writer's conference at Oxford, would they ask Sir Winston Churchill to open it, Lord Samuel to preside over it, or Tom Driberg to inaugurate an exhibition connected with it? Not likely; for while each one of them is an author with a number of books to his credit and a certain following, they are all writers on the side. Churchill, probably, has made more money by his books than most professional writers, while a man like Walter de la Mare has found poetry an unrewarding (in cash) if fascinating mistress. But the English man of letters would not look up to Churchill as the head of his profession.

In the world of contemporary journalists, unfortunately, candour has yielded place to calumny. What was once hailed as a profession of honest and

forthright seekers of truth has become a school for scandal. Flattery, naked abuse, direct name-calling and disinformation have become its cherished weapons. Journalistic writings are normally fated to die a quick death. In the words of Virginia Woolf, "The newspaper crocus radiates a golden glow... it is beautifully finished. But the night comes and these flowers fade." One can be certain that the writings of many of our journalists lacking a decent content as well as a graceful style will never survive the last decade of the twentieth century.

The autobiography, the memoir, the diary and the letter constituting what is called literature of self-revelation is of recent origin in India. If the autobiography may be defined as "the life-story of an individual, shaped and moulded by his environment, and in turn often moulding the society in which he moves," Nehru's *Autobiography* deserves the pride of place it has gained in the history of Indian writing in English. Though it has powerful rivals in Gandhiji's *My Experiments with Truth* and Tagore's *Reminiscences*, it is unique and unmatched in certain respects. Gandhiji's work, a document of the inner struggle of the spirit and its triumph, reminding us of the *Confessions* of St Augustine, was originally written in Gujarati, and translated by someone else into English. It is true that Tagore touched no genre which he did not adorn but his autobiography, giving a vivid picture of Calcutta of his time, reads like a romance employing a language too poetic for life-accounts.

Nehru's *Autobiography* not only reveals the great statesman but provides a clear insight into the causes of the Indian struggle for freedom. His scientific humanism, dislike of organised religion, love for his country coupled with his cosmopolitan outlook, his learning, his sincerity and sense of fair-play are all revealed in a language that challenges comparison with that of the great British masters of prose. There are remarkable pen-portraits of eminent personalities of his time. Comparing Gandhi and Motilal, his own father, he writes,

Walter Pater, in one of his books, mentions how the saint and the epicure, starting from opposite points, travelling different paths, one with a religious temper, the other opposed to it and yet both with an outlook which, in its stress and earnestness, is very unlike any lower development of temper, often understand each other better than either would understand the mere man of the world—and sometimes they actually touch.

If the greatness of this portrait is to be fully understood, one would do well to compare it with what Harindranath Chattopadhyaya writes about his own father in *Life and Myself*:

He was not a man, my father, but a veritable epoch: in myriad ways he established eras in realms of knowledge and in the realms of humanity.... I have never seen or met a man either of his spiritual integrity or intellectual

calibre living a world-life fulfilling every detail with precision and nobility, and yet all the while conscious of the masterpiece of life he was helping to build in his time while respecting the detail.

Biography is fast becoming a major literary form the world over but in this country neither the consummate artistry nor the mmoral courage required of a biogggrrapher is largely known. Lady Asquith wants every biographer to be bold and indiscreet and adds,

A biography must not be a brief either for or against its client, and it would be the same with an autobiography. In writing about yourself and other living people you must take your courage in both hands.

It is not enough if truth, frankness and honesty alone are cared for; the biographer must choose to write on the life of a man whose life is worth describing. And the truth from the life of a great man should be significant. Emphasising this, Goethe says,

A fact of our life is valuable, not so far as it is true, but so far as it is significant.

Many of the biographies written during the heyday of the freedom movement by eminent men in impeccable English fail to impress as intellectual biographies because of their emphasis on trivialities and their lack of sense of proportion.

Nirad C. Chaudhuri's *Scholar Extraordinary: The Life of the Rt. Hon. F. Max Müller* (1974), with its gripping account of the major events in the career of a great man of letters, portrays its hero as a researcher scorning delights and living laborious days, as a great editor of the Rig Veda and as a man who understood the soul of India and as a great propagandist interested in the glorification of India's spiritual heritage.

Chaudhuri has often been praised for being meticulously painstaking and felicitous in expression. His amazing acquaintance with Western literature, music, painting, sculpture and architecture is evident throughout the book though at times one may get annoyed by his recondite learning and by his fantastic arguments.

At this point someone might ask me, 'What is Civilization?' Although he might not wait for an answer, I will give one. At the end of the nineteenth century when mankind had taken a new leap towards material progress, advanced thinkers identified civilization with soap, as the symbol of cleanliness. *Sanitas sanitatum, omnia sanitas*, they cried triumphantly. But

the establishment of universal sanitation with universal suffrage has made the people of the West less confident. Finding that sanitation can co-exist with the most crushing forms of vulgarity or even rank barbarism of the mind, some of them are rushing to the extreme point of denying the idea of civilization altogether. I should like to reassure them by suggesting a new test for it, which I have employed. It is the number and prosperity of the shops dealing in antiques, old books and second-hand furniture. Judged by this test the people of England are very civilized, for I find these shops everywhere, stocking goods for all purses.

That he is an anglophile at the expense of his own countrymen may not please many:

To put the matter briefly, the Hindu is the European distorted, corrupted, and made degenerate, by the cruel torrid environment and by the hostility, both real and imagined, of the true sons of the soil.

The major task of the Indian writer in English is to convey the Indian feelings and thoughts in a foreign medium. As Raja Rao put it in his foreword to *Kanthapura*,

We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression, therefore, has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it.

Has the Indian writer in English created such a dialect? The answer is "No". But on this account, we cannot say that his achievement is not considerable. Though the Western critics are too prejudiced to do justice to writers like Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and Nehru, the latter will continue to please long and many. A large number of our orators and writers failed to survive because they consciously imitated inimitable writers like Johnson, Burke, Carlyle and Macaulay. They did not realize that they should always look for the right word, not for an obscure one. Only in their writings would you come across words like *enthuse*, *abracadabra*, and plenty of nonsensical rhymes, long words for their own sake, numerous abstractions and personifications. If tautology mars their style, their desire to display their learning makes them vain. They do not seem to be aware of the value of the dictum of the great French prose writers: "If you can cut out a word, cut it out."

(Concluded)

P. MARUDANAYAGAM

A NOVEL ADVERTISEMENT

ON the packing-cover of the “Ganga” toilet soap given to us from Prosperity, there is the caption: “Godrej guarantees that the water from the River Ganga is used in the manufacture of this soap.”

This reminded me of my childhood-days when a bottle of the sacred water from the River Ganga was invariably brought home at Alipurduar (North Bengal) from Calcutta by any of my relatives, whenever they visited us, for my mother for her worship and rituals.

She used to keep the bottle safe and pour out of it the precious contents only a little at a time like a veritable miser till another bottle from Calcutta was presented to her. When large quantities of the sacred water were needed for some yajna or special ritual, she used to pour a few drops from her bottle into a big pitcher of water to sanctify the whole lot for the purpose, which the local priests one and all accepted with reverence. Such is the import of this Mother of Rivers to most of us Indians

There is a mantra—

गङ्गे च यमुने चैव गोदावरि सरस्वति ।
नर्मदे सिन्धुकावेरि जलेऽस्मिन् सन्निधिं कुरु ॥

which invokes the spirit of the seven sacred rivers viz., Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu and Kaveri, when water from each of these seven are needed for a certain special ritual, to descend into the jug of water—thus exemplifying the deeper sense of Indian spirituality.

We have polluted the waters of the Ganga (as well as other rivers) to such an extent that it has become poisonous and extremely harmful for human beings—we have poisoned the physical body of Mother Ganga so to say—but even then Her spirit-eternal is ever present and ready to manifest whenever invoked. In homoeopathy, the lesser the amount of physical ingredient in higher and higher dilution, the greater is the potency. Here also, if you take a little from the immense volume of water of the River Ganga with the sacred name of Mother Ganga on your lips and invoke Her presence, Her spirit descends into it and makes it potent with purifying powers.

The soap-manufacturer might have used the water of the River Ganga from a purely commercial point of view to touch the sentiments of the consumers. But it attained a spiritual significance when one of our spiritual-brothers was said to have felt as if he was taking a bath in the sacred river itself when, after reading the declaration in the packing-cover of the soap, he applied the soap “Ganga” on his body and took a shower.

Spirit alone matters, Spirit is the essential reality but in the Integral Yoga we have come to the threshold of Spirit reconquering the material universe so that

the veil is rent and Matter looks into the face of Spirit and Spirit into the face of Matter in the nuptial chamber of "this-Earthly-life-changed-into-Life-Divine."

SATADAL

UNFOLDING

THAT was the day
That brought me into the Sun.
As I awoke so did the light
Increasing, extending, until—
As if suddenly—
That smiling brightness attained
Its eternal perfection,
It was all Love, nothing else existed.

As I step into
That moment of revelation,
Of glorious isolation
That now moves
Like a free-floating island
Glowing in Time's stream,
I become Her horizon
In all its sunrise marvel of Love.

DINKAR D. PALANDE

A STRANGE INCIDENT IN SRI AUROBINDO'S ROOM

I WAS with Champaklalji for my night duty in Sri Aurobindo's Room. It was around 1.30 a.m. I was lying down with my eyes closed. Suddenly I felt a very bad atmosphere, full of fear. Soon I saw a huge woman's figure descending. The woman was very tall, so tall that I could not even see her head and face. Her legs were extremely thick and the body very gross like a Rakshasi such as Taraka or Putana. She was wearing a dark skirt and on the upper part of her body there was a similarly coloured cloth with vivid patches.

The atmosphere of the chamber was suddenly changed. I could feel the reaction and I wanted to open my eyes and know about the woman—who she was and from where she had come, and for what purpose. I soon realised that she wanted to talk with Champaklalji and didn't want me to listen to their conversation; so she murmured some mantra and made a gesture with her hand as if she was casting some dark force or spell on me. Then she started talking with Champaklalji. It had an immediate effect on me and in spite of my great effort to open my eyes and get up and listen to their conversation I could not do so. I could only hear the sound of it but could not understand the sense of the words though it seemed to me that I knew the language. At that time I was fully conscious, not asleep. I tried hard to open my eyes but I could not. Then I started to worry what would happen to me in this condition if I had to stay in it forever. I prayed to the Mother to liberate me from this awkward condition and at the same time I tried very hard to get up and catch the meaning of their conversation but again I could not.

It seemed to me that their conversation was not unpleasant though the woman's face was grave with no sign of a smile. Champaklalji, on the contrary, was smiling and talking with her and willingly consenting to her ideas. He was not revolted at all, it was rather as if he was cooperating with her, with a happy ease. After a long conversation she left. Before leaving she passed her hand over my body without touching it, then I came to my normal senses and abruptly awoke and sat up. I felt heavily loaded with fear, inside and outside, and didn't know what to do. Suddenly I felt as if my heart was going to explode. I had even forgotten to call the Divine Grace for help. I looked at Sri Aurobindo's bed and the huge photo beside it and then at Nirod-da who was in sound sleep on the carpet in front of Sri Aurobindo's bed. I looked at Champaklalji too; he was fast asleep.

The room was lit by a dim night-lamp, and an utter silence pervaded it. I felt the horrible presence of fear gradually receding from the room. In me too the fear slowly got reduced but still I felt a tremendous uneasiness. I wanted to go to the Samadhi to pray to the Mother because I felt this hostile force had come to take Champaklalji out of his body. When I went down to the Samadhi I looked at the clock and saw that it was 2 a.m. Of course nobody was there at that time

around the Samadhi. A serene joy and calmness was everywhere. The dim light which burns always during the night was focussed on the whole Samadhi, while the surroundings were dark. The leaves of the Service Tree were murmuring in the soft cold wind, some of them falling down and resting on the Samadhi. The fragrance of the flowers arranged on it was spreading all around. As soon as I saw the Samadhi the fear in me disappeared but the memory of the fear was still there. I bowed down at the Samadhi for ten minutes and then went back to Champaklalji. He was sleeping as before.

I did not feel like lying down. I sat and looked at the large photo of Sri Aurobindo. Once again I felt the impact of the Force that pervades Sri Aurobindo's Room normally, since I was free of that dark influence. I meditated till quarter to four when Nirod-da got up. It is his usual rising time because he has to go down to the Samadhi at four o'clock for his daily service.

At 4.30 Champaklalji woke up. He gestured to me to remove his mosquito net. He was very calm and quiet. I thought it was the best time to ask about what had happened at two o'clock, so I described to him the whole incident as I had seen it. He was listening to me with a great curiosity, with a mild smile on his lips. Finally I asked him what would be the impact of it and who was the woman, the huge dark woman. "Why didn't she like me to listen to the conversation between you and her?" And finally the last question was, "Can the hostile forces penetrate into Sri Aurobindo's room also?"

In spite of my asking several times he did not reply to my questions and just turned his hand upwards as if it was known only to the Mother. According to me, after a few days the impact of that dark force was seen, because a few nights later at 12 o'clock, as I was lying down silently on the floor with eyes closed, I suddenly heard a loud sound. I got up and looked at Champaklalji's bed. He was not there! Nirod-da was not disturbed by the sound. He was in deep sleep.

I thought, "Where has Dadaji disappeared? Where has he gone?" Then I stood up and saw he was on the other side of the bed. He had fallen on top of a plastic bin of used tissue-paper. I felt very afraid and sorry. I lifted him with my two hands and put him in bed. Actually it was my fault. If I had not lain down and closed my eyes it would not have happened.

Normally, whenever he wanted anything he would make a particular sound and I would get up and attend on him. But that night he did not make any sound. He had wanted to put the used tissue-paper in the bin. Usually he did this every day himself without falling but this time he turned too much and fell down on his right side.

When I put him on the bed I asked him if he had pain anywhere in his body. He replied that he was o.k. I asked him again and again but he was firm in indicating that he was all right. Then he asked the time. I told him it was "12.05". I was a bit happier and thanked the Mother that nothing had happened to Champaklalji. I was scolding myself, "O Ramchandra, you are not serving

properly. If you had been sincere this would not have happened. It is your insincerity that made him fall.” But I was quite happy when he said he had no injury anywhere. I was sitting but he told me to lie down.

At 3.30 he wanted to pass urine. When I removed the shawl with which he had covered his body, I saw that his left knee was much swollen. Then immediately I called Nirod-da and he checked the injury and said I should apply ice right away. I called Kamala-ben and she brought the ice but when we applied it Champaklalji didn't like it because it caused more pain. I would have given the ice-treatment at 12 o'clock if I had known that he had been injured. I knew of this treatment.

Later Doctor Dilip-da came and Champaklalji was taken to the Nursing Home. No fracture was there fortunately, but he could not stand up and move his limbs according to his wish. The benefit that I got out of it was that I got to do the extra service of massaging his knee at 9.15 p.m. in addition to the regular body massage at 5 a.m.

When I asked him how he had fallen down he gestured as if someone had pushed him down. Then I suddenly remembered the incident of that dark woman in Sri Aurobindo's room a few days earlier. It was just my feeling, my calculation, but the reality behind that experience I do not know.

The *lilā* of saints is very strange; it is difficult to understand their character and behaviour. For example, Dadaji sometimes used to complain about some simple discomfort but this time, on the contrary, he had dashed his delicate knee against the half-foot tall cement boundary which had been raised there for some purpose but his face showed no sign of any pain or discomfort. He had surrendered unreservedly to the Mother. He used to say often, “May the Mother's Will be done and that is the best for us.” He was *sthitaprajña* as it is said in the Gita:

दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः

and

समः सुखदुःखेषु

that is to say, indifferent to pain and pleasure.

His childlike simplicity and his ever-loving, gleaming smile refreshes me again and again and never lets me forget his heart-touching affection for us. Though he is not physically present among us his love for the Mother and Sri Aurobindo helps us as a guide towards the summit of the sadhana.

RAMCHANDRA DAS

THE TRAYAMBAKA MANTRA: ITS MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE

(Continued from the issue of 24 November 1993)

5. The Mantra: Its Meaning And Significance

WE shall now return to the original passage. In the first part of the prayer the devotee is asking Trayambaka to separate him from death and in the second part he adds that he must not be separated from immortality. If we take the prayer as a whole, one important thing becomes clear. When the first part of the prayer is granted, the devotee will certainly be separated from death. But this does not mean that he will be free from the cycle of death which keeps the soul separated from immortality. Hence the prayer that he must not be separated from immortality, *māmrtāt mukṣīya*. This clearly indicates that in the first part of the prayer the devotee is not asking for freedom from the cycle of death but *something else*. This gives us a vital clue as to what the first part of the prayer precisely means.

We do not understand that *bandhanān-mrtyōr-mukṣīya* does not refer to the freedom from the cycle of death. Nevertheless, its reference is to some form of death from which the poet wants to be free. Now the question is this: what kind of death is it if it is not the cycle of death that binds this soul and separates it from immortality? As we have stated in the beginning, the Vedic poet is concerned with two forms of death—the death that binds his body and the death that binds his soul. We have also seen that for the Vedic poet physical death is mainly the death that occurs before the appointed time or before reaching old age. Now it is easy to decide which kind of death is spoken of in the first part of the prayer—it is the death that works through adverse circumstances and cuts short his full span of physical life in the world. We come to the same conclusion when we carefully analyse the metaphor *urvārukam* and put the right interpretation on it.

Now we have understood the prayer as a whole. The poet is praying to God Trayambaka for the fulfilment of two things, one concerning his body and the other his soul. First, he wants to live a full life without having to face physical death till he reaches a ripe old age, even as a cucumber, when spared from untimely death caused by adverse circumstances, attains full growth and becomes a ripe fruit. Second, he does not want at the same time to enjoy merely a full life in the body and remain separated from That which brings freedom to the soul from the cycle of death and bestows upon it the bliss of immortality. The aim of the Aryan poet is therefore to achieve fullness of life outwardly as well as inwardly: outwardly, it is a fullness of physical life; inwardly, it is a fullness of spiritual life. This explains why he has chosen to address his prayer to a God who is the increaser of fullness, *pustivardhanam*.

This Mantra which embodies the highest thought of the Veda is significant in three important respects: first, it shows how the Vedic poet is far advanced in his mental perceptions and in his ability to think clearly and cogently; second, it helps us to understand how he views embodied existence in the world; third, it is a shining example of how the Veda is the ultimate origin of the Vedanta.

(1) In the eyes of the western scholars the Vedic poets belong to a society of primitive men whose thoughts have not transcended the limits of the physical and therefore express themselves often in terms of images drawn from the physical world. Further, they maintain that on account of this limitation the poets cannot think clearly or arrange their thoughts in the right order.

If we carefully read the Mantra, we find that it does not in the least lend support to the above view. Let us first take the metaphor *cucumber* and see how it is used by the poet. He is thinking of his body. He sees that there are adverse circumstances which can destroy his body and shorten his physical life. But at the same time he sees that his body is capable of living a long-extended life and arriving at a ripe old age, for that is the will of God. As a poet, his aim is to find a suitable literary device by which he can express this complex idea without using abstract language. This he achieves by using the simile *cucumber*. Evidently he uses the simile not because he is incapable of going beyond the physical and thinking in abstract terms, but because he sees in it a good poetic value, a form of speech that carries multiple significances and so serves as the best means of expressing his abstract ideas.

Now we shall examine the poet's capacity for cogent thinking. Not only is he skilled in giving poetic form to his abstract thought but he moves from idea to idea with the ease and accuracy of a disciplined thinker. His thoughts have been arranged as perfectly as the notes of a melodious tune. He begins with the prayer that he be separated from untimely death and allowed to live a long life, like a cucumber. Then he realises that God may think that he does not care if he is not freed from the cycle of death that separates his soul from immortality, and may confer upon him only the boon of a long-extended life. Hence he closes his prayer by asking God not to separate him from immortality, *māmṛtāt*. This testifies to the fact of how the Vedic poet is far advanced in his capacity to think cogently and express his thoughts in the right sequence.

(2) We cannot think of a better passage than the Mantra to understand how the Vedic poet views embodied existence in the world. If we carefully read the second line of the Mantra, we find two important things in it. First, the poet is asking for two boons—a long life for the body and immortality for the soul; second, by deliberately connecting the two parts of his prayer through the word *muksiya* he suggests that the first is incomplete without the second. A long life in the body is a partial fulfilment of his desire for freedom which becomes complete when the informing soul in the body attains conscious union with immortality.

A long-extended life in the body is sought not for the ignorant soul who is

separated from immortality and subject to all that is evil, *viśvāni... duritāni* (5-82-5), but for the awakened soul who has attained conscious union with the Immortal who uses the human body as His habitation and lives there as the master of the habitation, *grhapatī* (4-9-4). United with the Immortal, the soul too becomes a master and uses the body as an instrument for God's work in the world. By so using the body the poet becomes a doer of divine works, *sukṛtaḥ* (4-13-1). The body is put to a right use when it becomes a good instrument that lives and works for a hundred years in utter obedience to the will of the liberated soul. We find an echo of this Vedic teaching in one of the early Upanisads, *īśāvāsyam idam sarvam* (all this is for habitation by the Lord) and *kuruvanneveha karmāni jīviṣet śatam samāh* (one should desire to live a hundred years here doing works). (*Īśā Upanisad*, 1 and 2).

(3) We find that nowhere else as in the above passage is the intimate connection between Veda and Vedanta so strikingly evident. A careful study of this Mantra and the *Īśāvāsyā Upanisad* reveals that from this Vedic seed the whole Upanisad has been developed. The formula of freedom as set forth in the Upanisad in verses 11 and 14—a prolonged life in the body (*mṛtyum tīrtvā*) and a conscious possession of immortality and its manifestation as the law of living in the same body (*amṛtam aśnute*)—is a Vedantic version of the Vedic Mantra.¹

N. JAYASHANMUKHAM

¹ For a detailed account of this view the reader is asked to see *Mother India*, February 1993, pp 122-130

A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS

(Continued from the issue of 24 November 1993)

12. TAMING THE UNTAMED

THE trumpets sounded. War drums thundered. Horses neighed. Elephants trumpeted. Soldiers yelled. The great battle at Venni (a village fifteen miles to the east of Tanjore) began

It was the maiden battle that Karikalan fought against the other two great forces of Tamil land—the Pandya and the Chera. Karikalan's war-strategies stunned his opponents and they suffered a crushing defeat.

The battle of Venni not only established young Karikalan firmly on his throne but also gave him a hold on the other crowned monarchs. The whole of the Tamil country had to accept his overlordship.

Karikalan's military superiority enabled him to reach the Himalayas, defeating on his way the princes of Vajra, Magadha and Avanti and levying tribute on them. With his powerful navy he conquered Ceylon and established his authority there.

Finding no king to fight against, Karikalan waged a war against the unruly river Kaviri. The large number of prisoners of war whom he had brought from various lands were pressed into service for the construction of a durable embankment for the river. He sent word to all chieftains and tributary kings of the Chola kingdom and also to the West of it to take part whole-heartedly in the raising of the flood-banks of the untamed river that flowed through their regions.

Rudran, one among the chieftains, cared a fig for Karikalan's command. He boasted that he was a descendant of Rudramurthy (the three-eyed Lord Siva). By drawing a third eye on his forehead like that of the Lord, he believed that like his ancestor he would be able to burn his opponents to ashes.

Rudran's audacity was brought to the notice of the king.

"It's high time, your majesty! that you sent a battalion to subdue the chieftain," suggested a minister. "Waste no time. Let not Rudran's ego go up."

Karikalan mischievously smiled at his minister. "He is not so great as you think," he said. "There is a way to handle everyone."

Unable to read the mind of Karikalan his minister blinked.

"Send word to the portrait-painter to paint a life-size portrait of Rudran... Let it be more beautiful than its model in flesh and blood. Tell him not to forget to paint the third eye that Rudran boasts of."

Puzzled, the minister went to carry out the king's command.

A couple of days later the painter came to the palace carrying the portrait of Rudran. He was accompanied by the minister

Karikalan looked at the portrait, patted the artist on his back for the good

job he had done and gave him a bag of gold.

No sooner did the portrait painter quit the palace than Karikalan started staring at the portrait. While the minister wondered what the king was going to do with it, the latter took up a spear and stabbed the third eye with it

Turning to his minister he said: "Now let this portrait be packed and sent to Rudran. Poor fellow! He is sick in mind. This portrait, I am sure, will effect a cure."

Rudran opened the package he had received as a present from Karikalan. He beamed with joy at the sight of his admirable portrait. But his jubilation went 'phut' like a blown-up balloon that was pierced. He began to sweat when he saw his third eye pierced. He didn't fail to sense the warning given by Karikalan. He became jittery.

On the morning of the next day Karikalan unrolled a scroll sent by Rudran only to read thus:

"Your Majesty! Thank you very much for the portrait and the lesson. By the time you read this letter, my men will have started their work on the banks of the river. It will be done under my supervision."

Karikalan's success in taming the river Kaviri brought stable and orderly prosperity to the delta region. His subjects adored him as a god in human form.

13. THE COCKEREL THAT STUNNED THE ELEPHANT

As Karikalan went on expanding his empire he felt the need for an alternate capital city. Having his headquarters in the port city, Kaviri Poom Pattinam, no doubt helped him to guard his people from the naval forces of his enemies. But he wanted an alternate capital city to make his subjects living in the interior lands feel secure

In a meeting held at his palace Karikalan expressed his desire.

"Where would you like to have the other capital?" asked a minister, knowing pretty well that the king wouldn't take anyone's suggestion.

"I will have to visit personally all the places in my kingdom and choose the right place," replied the king

"You are yet to inspect the embankment raised to tame the river Kaviri. So, your Majesty, if you go along the banks of the river, you are sure to find a suitable place to have your alternate capital," suggested a courtier.

"That's right. Two mangoes with one stone," said the king, to the surprise of everyone

On an auspicious day King Karikalan, seated on his elephant, began the long journey piloted and escorted by his able warriors.

As he moved from place to place along the riverside inspecting the raised flood-banks the people of those regions thronged to see their god in human

form. Greatly satisfied with the marvellous work done by his tributary kings and chieftains in taming the river, and feeling happy at the love and affection shown by the natives, Karikalan continued his journey.

As the retinue moved a little distance away from Tiruchirapalli, a cockerel flared up and gave a loud crow at the sight of the king's elephant. Ruffling its multi-coloured wings it darted like an arrow towards the huge animal.

Stunned stood the elephant.

The cockerel pecked at the sturdy legs of the animal incessantly running from one leg to another.

Karikalan and his retinue helplessly watched the poor animal trumpet in pain when blood started oozing from its pillar-like legs.

The cockerel flapped its wings and crowed as if declaring its victory over the animal. It then tripped leisurely away from the scene.

Dumbstruck sat Karikalan on the wounded elephant. He wondered why the animal failed to retaliate. It took little time for him to find an answer: "If a cock can stun a powerful animal, I am sure that this is a blessed place," he said to himself.

"Is there any city nearby?" Karikalan asked.

"Urayur is only a stone's throw from here. It is a great city," came the reply.

"Well then. Urayur shall be the alternate capital of the Chola empire," declared Karikalan.

14. LOVE CONQUERS DEATH

History speaks of King Karikalan as a megalomaniac. But legends galore praise him as a broad-minded lover of humanity as a whole. While it is true that he subdued the other two monarchs—the Chera and the Pandya—it is also true that he treated them on a par with himself. To them he was something more than a friend and their family members quite often visited the Chola capital and bathed in the sunshine of his love.

Once a Chera prince, by name Āttan Atti, visited the palace of King Karikalan. Broad-shouldered, sparkling-eyed, his face glowed with knowledge and wisdom. Karikalan liked his charming morning face and his politeness towards others. During his sojourn in the palace, his eyes fell on a court beauty. She too noticed him from the corner of her eye.

It was love at first sight.

The beauty was none other than a daughter of King Karikalan. The love-affair continued. The Chera prince went on postponing the day of his departure.

While the king permitted the prince to stay in his palace as long as he wanted, he was not without his own suspicions. And so he engaged one of his

spies to detect the source of his guest's interest in his palace.

The spy did a clean job.

“Oh! The source of his interest is my daughter?... How come I have forgotten that I have a grown-up daughter?... Well then! Let me do my duty as a father,” said Karikalan.

Āttan Atti and Ādhimandhi were declared husband and wife amidst beating of marriage drums and blowing of pipes and timbrels.

What the spy failed to detect was that Ādhimandhi was not the only source of interest for Āttan Atti's stay in the capital. He had a second love too.

Only Ādhimandhi detected it. Her husband's second love was senior to him by several thousand years. She was River Kaviri.

Āttan Atti was headlong in love with Kaviri, plunged into her every day and swam to his heart's content.

Ādhimandhi had accompanied her husband to the river Kaviri on several occasions and was delighted to see him revel in his sport.

Once under the very nose of Ādhimandhi her playful husband disappeared from the surface of the water. Her eyes searched for him as long as they could see. Seconds passed. They piled up to a minute. Still there was no trace of her husband.

Anxious minutes passed. Her heart began to drum against her chest. Tears threatened to trickle out of her eyes.

Suddenly there emerged Āttan Atti, shaking the water off his head. Ādhimandhi breathed a sigh of relief.

Reaching the bank, Āttan Atti giggled at the plight of his wife. In a consoling tone, he said: “Oh! My dear! I am an expert in holding my breath. I can remain under water for several minutes together, thanks to a Siddha who taught me the art of meditation and breath-control.

Ādhimandhi held her husband's face in the cup of her palms and said in an enticing tone: “I can't afford to lose you.”

Āttan Atti smiled at his wife and said: “Certainly not to Kaviri.”

It was the month of Adi (the fourth Tamil month—mid July to mid August). The river Kaviri was in spate. People welcomed the floods with the beat of drums. It was only during that time that they tilled their lands and sowed the seeds to have a rich yield. The entire Chola Kingdom was in a festive mood.

Āttan Atti and Ādhimandhi, as usual, went to the river. On its banks had gathered a countless number of men and women. Everyone beamed with joy as their eyes stood glued to the river running in spate. But invariably all of them kept a safe distance from the ferocious waters.

When no one dared to dip even their feet into the river, Āttan Atti twirled up his moustaches and to the shock of everyone jumped into the wild river.

A chill ran down the spine of Ādhimandhi. But the thought that her husband was an expert swimmer flashed in her mind. She consoled herself that

nothing would happen to him

Yet something unfortunate happened. The swimmer *par excellence*, the lover of Kaviri, was seen struggling in vain in the tentacles of the floods.

Many in the crowd prayed to the Almighty to save the prince from the impending disaster. A few said to themselves in an inaudible tone: "Had he no eyes to see the murderous floods? What a stupid fellow is he!"

Yet unperturbed stood Ādhimandhi gleefully watching her husband fight against the floods. People became panicky. With their mouths agape they watched the river Kaviri overpower the prince. When he disappeared from the scene all of a sudden, they made a hullabaloo. They looked at Ādhimandhi with fear-filled eyes. But she only giggled at their plight.

Several minutes passed. While many in the crowd ran hither and thither searching for Āttan Atti, Ādhimandhi's eyes moved from place to place.

A couple of hours vanished. There was no trace of Āttan Atti. The crowd began to melt.

News reached Karikalan. He rushed to the spot where stood his daughter surrounded by many men and women. They were trying to tell her that she had lost her husband to Kaviri.

"No!" yelled Ādhimandhi. "My husband will never desert me... Leave me alone."

King Karikalan sent out many of his expert swimmers to search for the body of Āttan Atti.

Several hours passed. There was no news about the missing prince.

It was getting dark. It grew darker.

Karikalan asked his daughter to come home. She replied, "Not until my husband comes back."

Karikalan pleaded. She replied: "My husband and I came here together. How can I go home alone?"

Karikalan cringed. She said in a determined tone: "Nothing but the presence of my husband can uproot me from this place."

As a dutiful father Karikalan had no other way but to share the anxious moments of his daughter.

The little birds in the trees began to twitter and chirp. The sun very reluctantly woke up from his bed.

Karikalan restlessly moved up and down the bank. At a distance he saw someone come running towards them.

Both of them stood with great expectations as a messenger neared them.

"Your Majesty!" he said, panting like a dog. "A body is found floating at the estuary. Our men have plunged into action to retrieve the body from the dangerous spot."

Karikalan mounted his horse and galloped. The wheels of the chariot carrying Ādhimandhi rotated faster than ever.

By the time they could reach the spot, the body of Āttan Atti was brought to the bank of the river.

“There is no life in him, Your Majesty!” said a swimmer.

“No! Can’t be,” roared Ādhimandhi “There must be life in him. River Kaviri, the Mother of millions of living things on earth, can never be cruel to my husband who adored her.”

Karikalān heaved a sigh, and as if to satisfy his daughter’s wish, he took Āttan Atti by his legs and swirled him.

What a surprise! Water gushed from Āttan Atti’s mouth and nose. The process was repeated and to the awe of everyone he came back to life. All that he needed was rest.

Ādhimandhi smiled at her father. He wiped her tears. They were tears of joy

(More legends on the way)

P. RAJA

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Special Seventy-fourth Seminar

25 April 1993

“WHAT ARE THE LESSONS OF LIFE THAT I HAVE LEARNT FROM THE MOTHER?”

Speech by Jhumur Bhattacharya

WHAT has the Mother taught us? The answer is simple, short and absolute. In one word, it is: “Everything.” This is not an exaggeration nor is it a manner of speaking. It is the truth.

We grew up with her as the centre of our existence and saw her constantly working, moving, speaking, blessing, even playing. She took part in everything, nothing was too small or unimportant for her attention. And everything became with her a constant and continuous expression of the Divine. Sri Aurobindo has written, “All life is Yoga.” She made it so, and showed us, by her own example, how we too could make it Yoga. The only thing we needed to remember was to make ourselves and our lives conscious, that through whatever we did, said or felt, we could manifest the Divine. Nothing is excluded from our life in the Ashram. All the activities of mind and body are encouraged. The only thing she has asked us to eradicate is inconscience and ignorance. And the way to do so is to eliminate the ego which is the barrier that comes between ourselves and her.

The main problem, therefore, is the ego, the annulment of which is not easily done.

The Grace, of course, is always there to help us. But we must actively surrender to it by calling on the Mother and turning to her, by offering ourselves to her alone. I remember reading, as a child, a sentence that Sri Aurobindo had written. We were told that he had wanted it to be displayed in every section and department of the Ashram. It was “Always behave as if the Mother was looking at you; because she is, indeed, always present.”¹

The knowledge of the Presence makes us more consciously turned towards her, reminding us to remain more luminous, so that we may not allow the lower nature to come to the fore. To us children, she had given a similar guideline. She had said that the best way to distinguish right from wrong was to look into ourselves and decide what we would or could do or say before her and what we would prefer to keep hidden from her sight. The lesson here is obviously that we

¹ *The Mother* (Cent Ed, Vol 25), p 105

should try to remain inwardly in her presence, to be open to her influence, to be consciously turned towards her, so that she may do her work in us and shape us into whatever she wishes us to become.

Openness and surrender. The lessons are very simple and they lead to absolute happiness. To be cut off in consciousness from her brings suffering. There is no other pain.

The Mother is not only the aim of our existence, she is also the means by which we attain this aim. She is the Path, she is the Goal, she is also the Help by which we walk along the Path. The Supreme Divine Consciousness has come down and put itself within our grasp in the shape of our Mother.

Therefore, the real lesson our life must learn and never cease to enrich itself with is to turn it Mother-wards and make it Mother-filled