

# MOTHER INDIA

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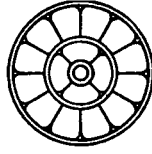
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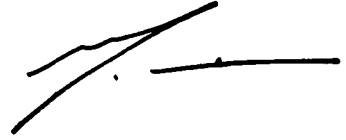
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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No. 2

*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

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## A HUNDRED YEARS AGO...

A HUNDRED years ago – on February 6, 1893, at about 10.55 a.m. – the young Aurobindo Ghose, not yet 21, returning from England after a stay of 14 years, set foot again on the soil of his native land. It was at Apollo Bunder in Bombay. The moment he did so, a vast calm from above his head enveloped him, a mysterious silence which remained with him for several months. This was the first greeting of the presiding spirit of Mother India to one who was to be the most extraordinary of her sons in the near future.

At that moment something heavy which had long hung about him vanished. Years earlier, before being taken abroad at the age of 7 by his father, he had experienced a strange darkness entering his body and making for a subtle inertia or *tamas*, as Indian psychophysiology terms it, which lingered in him all through his stay in England despite his brilliant academic career and the enthusiastic feeling he had developed for India's freedom from British rule.

That darkness may be taken to have represented two things. Immediately, it stood for the abject condition of India under foreign domination, a condition half of weakness and half of ignorance overspreading her surface consciousness. When the young Aurobindo came back to his country, she gave him a fore-glance of her true self – an inner being which was wide and peaceful, powerful and free – by invoking which as a divine Mother Might he was to fight for her political liberty.

In the second place the darkness stood for the general state of the modern world. A vigorous scientific temper had pervaded all fields of human existence, bringing along with its salutary reaction against the other-worldly trend of the prevailing religions a dangerous push towards a materialism discounting the disclosures of the inner spiritual life. It sneered at the long search in the past for the ultimate meaning of the universe in which man had toiled and agonised and rejoiced and dreamed. India, where this search had been most sustained, had also come under the shadow to a considerable extent through the glamour of Western education. But she had at the same time a counter force. There was Sri Ramakrishna, a striking example of a glorious spiritual light in the midst of his total lack of any touch of Western education or even any Indian education to speak of: he could neither read nor write Bengali, his mother-tongue. But his work was not enough. It laid stress on renunciation. Though wide-visioned, it created a new sannyasi order. A further illumination was necessary, which would be as this-worldly as science yet strive to establish in terms of Matter a dynamic Divine Consciousness. The side-by-side destinies of the movement Sri Ramakrishna initiated and the movement the young Aurobindo was to set going some decades later is lit up by a strange coincidence. Sri Ramakrishna's greatest disciple, the youthful Swami Vivekananda, sailed to the West to represent Indian spirituality at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in the very year –

mother india, february 1993

1893 – which saw the youth who was to be the future Sri Aurobindo return to the East.

A hundred years back the Master of the Integral Yoga was still to flower. He was as yet only a budding poet and an aspiring patriot. But the wonderful experience which marked his arrival in India was not only a pointer to the role he was to play as an ardent creative national leader with the soul's cry of *Bande Mataram* – “I bow to You, O Mother!” It was also a pointer to the supreme Yogic Guru he was to become, as well as the poet of the immense spiritual epic *Savitri* and the one to whom Rabindranath Tagore would exclaim: “You have the Word and we are waiting to accept it from you. India will speak through your voice to the world, ‘Hearken to me!’ ”

But how will India speak with full right unless we see in that wonderful experience a further pointer – an index finger directed towards a state in which India as a whole would bring herself to be in all the spheres of her life, a state where the human is linked to a divine Mystery both beyond and within, whose revelation in various measures is essential for the fulfilment of her outer self of multiple activity.

February 6 this year is a reminder that India's greatness, and with it the greatness of the world connected with her, lie in her becoming more and more Aurobindonian.

K. D. SETHNA

## MESSAGES FROM THE MOTHER

### WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN SADHANA

IN your sadhana what is important is sincerity at every point; if there is that, mistakes can be rectified and do not so much matter. If there is any insincerity, that pulls down the sadhana at once. But whether this constant sincerity is there or there is any falling off from it at any point, is a thing you must learn to see in yourself; if there is the earnest and constant will for it, the power to see will come. Sincerity does not at all depend on satisfying others—it is an inner matter and lies solely between you and me.

May 12, 1939

### LIFE'S PURPOSE

Life has a purpose.

This purpose is to find and to serve the Divine.

The Divine is not far. He is in ourselves, deep inside and above the feelings and the thoughts. With the Divine is peace and certitude, and even the solution of all difficulties.

Hand over your problems to the Divine and He will pull you out of all difficulties.

July 2, 1970

### TO THE PEOPLE OF INDIA

Overgrow your small egoistic personality and become a worthy child of our Mother India, fulfil your duties with honesty and rectitude, and always keep cheerful and confident, with a steady trust in the Divine's Grace



## A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO A SADHAK ON 28 SEPTEMBER 1966

*Why is there suffering? How to cure suffering?*

FOR a long time quite recently, that is to say, for days together, there was a very acute, very intense, very clear perception that the action of the Force translated itself externally by what we call "suffering" because that is the only kind of vibration which can pull Matter out of its inertia.

The supreme Peace, the supreme Calm are deformed and disfigured into inertia and into *tamas*, and precisely because this was the deformation of true Peace and Calm, there was no reason why it should change! A certain vibration of awakening—of reawakening—was necessary to come out of this *tamas*, that could not pass directly from *tamas* to Peace; something was needed to shake the *tamas*, and that is translated externally by suffering

I am speaking here of physical suffering, because all the other sufferings—vital, mental, emotional sufferings—are due to a wrong working of the mind, and these... may simply be classed together as Falsehood, that's all. But physical suffering gives me the impression of a child being beaten, because here, in Matter, Falsehood has become ignorance, that is to say, there is no bad will—no bad will is there in Matter, all is inertia and ignorance: complete ignorance of the Truth, ignorance of the Origin, ignorance of the Possibility and ignorance even of what is to be done in order not to suffer physically. This ignorance is everywhere in the cells, and it is only the experience, the experience of what is translated in this rudimentary consciousness as suffering, which can awaken, bring forth the need to know and to cure, and the aspiration to transform oneself.

It has become a certainty, because in all the cells there is born the aspiration, which is becoming more and more intense and which wonders at the resistance; but they have observed that whenever something goes wrong in the working (that is to say, instead of being supple, spontaneous, natural, the working becomes a painful effort, a struggle against something which takes the appearance of a bad will, but is only a reticence that does not understand), at that moment, the intensity of the aspiration, of the call, is tenfold, becomes constant. The difficulty is to remain at that state of intensity. Generally everything falls back, I cannot say into a somnolence, but a kind of relaxation: you take things easy; and it is only when the inner disorder becomes painful that the intensity grows and remains permanent. For hours—hours together—without slackening, the call, the aspiration, the will to be united with the Divine, to become the Divine, is maintained at its maximum. Why? Because there was externally what is called a physical disorder, a suffering. Otherwise, when there

is no suffering, from time to time one soars up, then one falls back into a slackening; again another time one soars up once more... there is no end to it. That lasts eternally. If we want things to go fast (relatively fast according to the rhythm of our life), this smack of the whip is necessary. I am convinced of it, because as soon as you are within your inner being you look upon that with contempt (as regards oneself).

But then, all of a sudden, when there comes this true Compassion of the Divine Love, and when one sees all these things that appear so horrible, so abnormal, so absurd, this great pain which is upon all beings and even upon all things... then there takes birth in this physical being the aspiration to soothe, to cure, to remove that. There is in Love, at its Origin, something which is translated constantly as the intervention of Grace: a force, a sweetness, something like a vibration of solace spread everywhere, but which an illumined consciousness can direct, concentrate on some points. And it is there, there itself that I saw the true use one can make of thought: thought serves as a kind of channel to carry this vibration from place to place, wherever it is necessary. This force, this vibration of sweetness is there in a static way upon the world, pressing in order to be received, but it is an impersonal action. And thought—illumined thought, surrendered thought, thought which is no longer anything but an instrument, which tries no longer to initiate things, which is satisfied with being moved by the higher Consciousness—thought serves as an intermediary to establish a contact, a relation, and to enable this impersonal Force to act wherever it is necessary, upon definite points.

It may be said in an absolute way that an evil always carries its own remedy. One might say that the cure of any suffering coexists with the suffering. So, instead of seeing an evil “useless” and “stupid” as it is generally thought to be, you see that the progress, the evolution which has made the suffering necessary—which is the cause of the suffering and the very reason for its existence—attains the intended result; and at the same time the suffering is cured, for those who are able to open themselves and receive. The three things—suffering as a means of progress, progress, and the cure of suffering—are coexistent, simultaneous; that is to say, they do not follow each other, they are there at the same time.

If, at the moment when the transforming action creates a suffering, there is in that which suffers the necessary aspiration and opening, the remedy also is taken in at the same time, and the effect is total, complete: transformation, with the action necessary to obtain it, and, at the same time, cure of the false sensation produced by the resistance. And the suffering is replaced by... something which is not known upon this earth, but which is akin to joy, well-being, trust and security. It is a supersensation, in a perfect peace, and which is obviously the only thing that can be eternal.

This analysis expresses very imperfectly what one would call the “content” of Ananda.

I believe it is something that has been felt, experienced, partially and in a very fleeting manner, through all the ages, but which has just begun to concentrate and almost concretise itself upon earth. But physical matter, in its cellular form, has, one cannot say fear or anxiety, but a kind of apprehension of new vibrations, and this apprehension naturally takes away from the cells their receptivity and assumes the appearance of uneasiness—it is not suffering, but an uneasiness. When, however, this apprehension is counterbalanced and cured by aspiration and the will for total surrender and by the act of total surrender, then this sort of apprehension, having disappeared, becomes a supreme well-being.

All this, they are as though microscopic studies of the phenomena of consciousness, free from mental intervention. The necessity of using words to express oneself brings this mental intervention, but in the experience it does not exist. And it is very interesting, because the pure experience has a content of truth, of reality, which disappears as soon as the mind intervenes. There is a savour of true reality which altogether escapes expression because of that. It is the same difference as between an individual and his portrait, a fact and the story told. It is like that. But it is much more subtle.

And then, to come back to what we were saying just now, when one is conscious of this Force—this Force, this Compassion in its essential reality—and when one sees how it can act through the conscious individual, one has the key to the problem.

(“Notes on the Way”, *The Mother’s Collected Works*, Vol 11, p 41 )

## WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

### A DEFINITION BY SRI AUROBINDO

It must.. 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 as preparatory movements disciplining, purifying or giving a suitable form to the nature; but they still belong to the mental evolution,—the beginning of a spiritual realisation,—experience, change is not yet there. 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 union 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.

(*The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol 19, p 857 )

## SRI AUROBINDO ON THE INTELLECT

THERE IS NO reason why one should not receive through the thinking mind, as one receives through the vital, the emotional and the body. The thinking mind is as capable of receiving as these are, and, since it has to be transformed as well as the rest, it must be trained to receive, otherwise no transformation of it could take place.

It is the ordinary unenlightened activity of the intellect that is an obstacle to spiritual experience, just as the ordinary unregenerated activity of the vital or the obscure stupidly obstructive consciousness of the body is an obstacle. What the sadhak has to be specially warned against in the wrong processes of the intellect is, first, any mistaking of mental ideas and impressions or intellectual conclusions for realisation; secondly, the restless activity of the mere mind which disturbs the spontaneous accuracy of psychic and spiritual experience and gives no room for the descent of the true illuminating knowledge or else deforms it as soon as it touches or even before it fully touches the human mental plane. There are also of course the usual vices of the intellect,—its leaning towards sterile doubt instead of luminous reception and calm enlightened discrimination; its arrogance claiming to judge things that are beyond it, unknown to it, too deep for it by standards drawn from its own limited experience; its attempts to explain the supraphysical by the physical or its demand for the proof of higher and occult things by the criteria proper to Matter and mind in Matter; others also too many to enumerate herè. Always it is substituting its own representations and constructions and opinions for the true knowledge. But if the intellect is surrendered, open, quiet, receptive, there is no reason why it should not be a means of reception of the Light or an aid to the experience of spiritual states and to the fullness of an inner change

\*

The turmoil of mental (intellectual) activity has also to be silenced like the vital activity of desire in order that the calm and peace may be complete. Knowledge has to come but from above. In this calm the ordinary mental activities like the ordinary vital activities become surface movements with which the silent inner self is not connected. It is the liberation necessary in order that the true knowledge and the true life-activity may replace or transform the activities of the Ignorance.

\*

Intellectual activities are not part of the inner being—the intellect is the outer mind.

\*

The intellect can be as great an obstacle as the vital when it chooses to prefer its own constructions to the Truth.

\*

Its function is to reason from the perceptions of the mind and senses, to form conclusions and to put things in logical relation with each other. A well-trained intellect is a good preparation of the mind for greater knowledge, but it cannot itself give the yogic knowledge or know the Divine—it can only have ideas about the Divine, but having ideas is not knowledge. In the course of the sadhana intellect has to be transformed into the higher mind which is itself a passage towards the true knowledge.

\*

The intellect of most men is extremely imperfect, ill-trained, half-developed—therefore in most the conclusions of the intellect are hasty, ill-founded and erroneous or, if right, right more by chance than by merit or right working. The conclusions are formed without knowing the facts or the correct or sufficient data, merely by a rapid inference and the process by which it comes from the premisses to the conclusions is usually illogical or faulty—the process being unsound by which the conclusion is arrived at, the conclusion is also likely to be fallacious. At the same time the intellect is usually arrogant and presumptuous, confidently asserting its imperfect conclusions as the truth and setting down as mistaken, stupid or foolish those who differ from them. Even when fully trained and developed, the intellect cannot arrive at absolute certitude or complete truth, but it can arrive at one aspect or side of it and make a reasonable or probable affirmation; but untrained, it is a quite insufficient instrument, at once hasty and peremptory and unsafe and unreliable.

\*

The mind does not record things as they are, but as they appear to it. It catches parts, omits others; afterwards the memory and imagination mix together and make a quite different representation of it.

(*Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 24, pp. 1243-1245 )

# LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

## SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

I HAVE been much interested by your comment:

“Apropos your ‘Life—Poetry—Yoga’ in the May *Mother India*, where you have quoted St. Augustine’s well-known sentence ‘Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee’, I remember to have read it originally in German which runs thus:

“ ‘Du hast uns zu Dir hin geschaffen, und ruhelos ist unser Herz bis es Ruhe findet in Dir.’

“Here the words ‘zu Dir hin’ meaning ‘towards Thee’ (‘hin’ conveys movement) make the statement profounder still, as they indicate the Divine’s intention in creating us. The whole meaning then reads: ‘Thou hast created us towards Thyself and restless is our heart until it finds peace in Thee.’

“Thinking that you might perhaps enjoy this rendering I have given it.”

The German translation “zu Dir hin”—“towards Thyself”—is a literal rendering of the Latin original. The whole statement in Latin reads: “Fecisti nos ad Te et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in Te.” The “ad Te” means “towards Thee”. But however it may sound in German, the phrase is awkward in English. In Latin it easily suggests direction without any awkwardness, and it conveys the purpose of the creation. A full explication would go thus: “Thou hast made us such that we may move towards Thee.” The best and natural englishing of the suggestion of God’s Godward-directed creation—summing up His purpose—is the preposition “for”. A more Biblical mode of putting the matter would be: “Thou hast made us unto Thyself”. Though somewhat archaic, this is better English than “Towards Thee”. Certain compact Latin expressions give a lot of trouble to the English translator if he is after literalness.

Thus a bone of contention has been Virgil’s concentrated “Sunt lacrimae rerum”, literally “There are tears of things” or “Tears are of things”. Some scholars have seen nothing extraordinary here and argued that at times in Latin the genitive is used in place of the dative so that Virgil meant “There are tears for things” suggesting that there are occasions which naturally draw tears from us or, rather, tears are naturally drawn from us by certain occasions. The world-cry which Virgil has succinctly packed into his brief phrase is entirely lost in such a commonplace interpretation.

C. Day Lewis has rightly taken Virgil to connote “Tears in the nature of things”. Virgil’s whole line—

Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt—

has been quintessenced by Sri Aurobindo in the second of the two lines among many which he puts in the mouth of Savitri’s mother:

We have sorrow for a greatness passed away  
And feel the touch of tears in mortal things. (Cent. Ed., p. 429)

Lewis's full English version runs:

Tears in the nature of things, hearts touched by human transience.

I have put Virgil's significance in a more extended way and with what Sri Aurobindo calls "more colour" in the hexameter:

Haunted by tears is the world and our hearts by the touch of things mortal.

My letter has made quite a digression. My point is that what is pregnant in Latin cannot always be conveyed by a literal translation in English without its sounding a little artificial

Now a word about the literary qualities of the original Augustine and the English and German versions. The German "until it finds peace in Thee" is not satisfactory. Besides departing from the conciseness of the Latin and bringing in the indirect "finds peace" instead of a straight verbal turn like "requiescat", it introduces a tinge of separateness between soul and God, as if the soul sought peace and would discover it as a quality of God's nature and enjoy it while remaining its own self: the sheer plunging into God's being and getting completely enfolded and suffused and fulfilled by it seems missed. There is no "finds" in Augustine. The English version answers exactly to the direct thrust of the Latin. The German "ruhelos" and "Ruhe" strike me as more explicit echoes than the Latin "inquietum" and "requiescat", though the latter's sound does have a subtle harking back within it to the former's. On a level with the German are the correspondences of the English "restless" and "rest". The sense is better driven home thus. But the Latin has the edge on the English by the repetition of "Te" in the two expressions "ad Te" and "in Te". The German also has it by its repeated "Dir". But in English it would be most gauche to say "for Thee" in order to anticipate "in Thee". We cannot avoid "Thyself" and I feel that the variations "Thou", "Thyself" and "Thee" make a very pleasing music which the German narrowly misses and the Latin cannot help doing so because "Thou" cannot stand apart from the verb "Fecisti" without a loss in style: it has to be implicit in it. Augustine could have rung changes by saying "Teipsum" ("Thyself") rather than anticipating his final "Te", but when "Te", like the German "Dir", could suffice he would have spoiled the austere beauty carrying the thrilled insight of his sentence. (14.5.1992)

\*

You have raised the question of sincerity. In its essence sincerity means to me to find your central self, your soul, and let its luminous guidance determine every



turn of your life. Before the psychic being is discovered, sincerity consists in so ordering your life—its actions and reactions—that everything may conduce to the opening of the inner heart-centre. The psychic element in the mind and in the vital force should be your teacher. Here my master-formula is to be applied: equanimity plus “remember and offer.” Whoever takes to the spiritual ideal has been led to it either by a direct explosion of the secret dweller in the heart-centre or by this “divine dwarf” ’s fingers of light extended above into the vibrant brain and below into the quivering guts no less than straight into the sensitive fibres of the outer heart of emotion. Of course, even after the soul has been found and its presence felt at all moments, one has to be vigilant, for it is for a long time a shy godhead and one has to guard it like a small flame between one’s hands against the rude winds of the world. At a later stage not only its sweetness and light but also its strength will emerge and then it can defend itself against the rudest gust. The “divine dwarf” will then tower up and open your being to all the shining vastitudes of the “overhead” Spirit.

You want me to share with you whatever gifts of grace I may have received. Surely all such gifts are to be shared, though not always before they are firmly set within one. I have never stored them up, never stunted letting my friends be touched by them. But I have no personal desire to be considered a good sadhak or a spiritual helper. All I do is to remain to the best of my ability in a concentrated condition and let Sri Aurobindo radiate his peace and the Mother diffuse her love.

The concentrated condition means that I am concerned only with keeping myself plunged in that peace and bathed in that love—without any open attempt to be their channels. All I do with people is to inwardly offer them to our Gurus. Of course I don’t keep majestically “mum”, impressing people with my concentration. I talk with them on an equal footing and often I find them more knowledgeable and better personalities than myself. In my talk I try to let the depths speak—not necessarily deliberate “words of wisdom” but common speech emerging as far as possible out of the treasured silence of those depths.

(31.5.1992)

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Your cries for help have been reaching me for quite a time. I am offering you into the hands of our Divine Mother. The answer I get is: “Patient endurance.” You have to stop being frantic. The fear-complex has come before and it has gone. Now too it will be on its way out. You must be certain of this. In the meantime you have to look at it calmly or rather look away from it with the certainty that it will pass. If something in you remains undisturbed and takes it as a temporary aberration which the Mother’s gracious hands will surely sweep out of you, the free future is already there in a hidden form in the obsessive present. Along with this attitude or posture, continue with your medication. Go to the

psychiatrist and state your symptoms from time to time. The Mother's force can work also through the drugs. The Supreme Grace is many-moded. But the central mode for you is "Patient endurance."

Your father is indeed very considerate and he is right in suggesting that you can take your degree 6 months later. Acceptance of his suggestion will take away the sense in you that you are falling back in the competition with your fellow-workers. Following your father's advice you will withdraw from the competition and will escape the inferiority complex you are developing. But I won't induce you to be a home-keeper. Go to your work as regularly as you can. Something must occupy your mind and body. Staying at home, what will you do? Read and sleep? Perhaps more sleep may help, but for that you don't have to flee altogether from the hospital. You have only to get up later in the morning and go to bed earlier at night.

You have quoted some Mantras of the Mother. The first is: "Let each suffering pave the way to transformation." But surely suffering by itself is no way to either transformation or anything else except perhaps inner toughness. All depends on how you manage the suffering—how calm you are, how patient you are, how much you appeal to the Divine to take you nearer him through this trial. The second Mantra is. "Grace will never fail us—such is the faith we must keep constantly in our hearts." But do you expect the Grace to be always swift? Of course it can be swift as a lightning-shaft, but there would be no need for the words "faith" and "constantly" if such were the case on all occasions. People pass through various ordeals in Yoga. Some conditions persist for long. Sri Aurobindo even speaks of his own sadhana stopping at times for months in spite of his being under a Supreme Guidance! What did he do? He kept faith and practised patient endurance and kept up a quiet aspiration. (2.8.1992)

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Your letter No. 1 (7.8.92) has made me very happy. I have always wished you to be on the way to normalcy, and finding you so because of a letter of mine is quite a fulfilling experience. Keep the new state going by means of a calm confidence in the Mother's power. This power is always at work but receptivity and faith not only increase its effect in general: they also draw it into the most outer being and sustain its lustrous streaming into all the various parts of our waking outwardness.

Now for your "posers". The first is: "How to do the *right thing* in the *right way* at the *right time*?" Try to detach yourself from the situation so that the personal heat may not dictate the course of action. This amounts to what the Mother has called "stepping back" for a moment. A sudden silence will be felt and out of it a guidance will emerge. Lift this guidance towards the Mother and let the consecrated decision go out into the world. The movement may not be

very positive at the start but gradually it will be quietly clear-cut and leave you sure that the Divine in the depth of you has acted

Your next question is: "The Mother says, 'A day without a *good action* is a day without soul' What does this good action amount to?" I remember the Mother saying that the Divine gives more value to a truly disinterested deed than to formal religious worship—going to a temple or carrying out a set ritual. The word "soul" in your quotation is a pointer to the Mother's meaning. For the soul in us is free of the narrow ego-motivated turn and it acts with an intuitive feeling of the Divine's secret will. The small self, demarcated from other small selves, is overpassed and one acts out of a wide impersonal space in which the soul, though an individual, is never cut off from other souls but lives and functions in a sweet luminous sympathy which is an aspect of the omnipresence of God.

You have asked: "What to do about the *acute lack of confidence*, at work or otherwise?" The sense that one has to compete with others whom one considers superior is the basis of this lack and behind that sense is the belief that one's own self is the only factor concerned. When one offers one's work to the Divine and cares only for the effective transmission of the Divine's force, one does not bother how one ordinarily compares with others in capacity. The Divine can not only make the most of whatever little capacity one has but also improve and expand such capacity. The main thing is to get over one's preoccupation with oneself and work as a dedicated sadhak.

The "jealousy" and the "inferiority-complex" of which you complain have the same root as "the acute lack of confidence" You have to drop making comparisons of one ego with another. Your aim must be service of the Divine in the way the Divine wants you to serve Him. By putting your personality at the Divine's feet you will bring the Divine's hands into action for whatever goal the Divine's eyes have chosen. Sometimes a certain imbalance in the nerves adds to one's psychological attitude. Here the psychiatrist with his potent pharmacopoea may come in as an additional help to you. That is why I drew your attention to him

You say: "I am still doubting my intelligence as I find my mentation to be a bit hazy and vague and sluggish." I think that your impression is due to the disturbance which you suffered some time ago and the disuse of your mental powers which followed. Knowing what a fine show your mind made in the MBBS exam and appreciating also the keenness with which you are able often to analyse yourself and the felicity with which you frequently express your condition, I can vouch that you have a fine intelligence indeed. You have only to quiet your being and invoke the Mother's light to get the ability to see your own mind properly. Neither undervaluing nor overvaluing it, stop bothering about it and place it at the Mother's disposal.

You want to know "how to distinguish between the 'tranquil Vast throbbing behind our human smallness' and the consciousness of calm and self-giving that

is developing.” I would advise you to concern yourself with the consciousness you speak of. Its development will set you in touch with that tranquil yet throbbing Vast. The calm you experience is a foretaste of this Vast’s tranquillity and the self-giving is a prefigure of its throbbing

Your last question—“How to know the Divine Will and get the strength for carrying out that Will?”—is answered by pointing out to you what you are already doing: the development of calm and self-giving. Like a flame burning in a windless place, straight up and without a quiver, your practice will pierce into the mystery of the Divine Dynamism and you will know that the Dynamism contacted is Divine by the further peace you will enjoy along with a sense of further magnetic movement towards the Mother. In this condition her Will is bound to get revealed and start reshaping things. (19.8.1992)

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Of all the mantras given by the Mother my favourite is *Sri Aurobindo sharanam mama*—“Sri Aurobindo is my refuge ” I have found it extremely powerful and at the same time deeply restful. It cuts through the hardest obstacle and carries the heart as if to its eternal home. I almost sense an aura forming with its utterance, within which I move protected from all inner forces of harm and on occasion even from all outer attacks. Originally, I believe, the Mother gave it to the sadhak whose job it was to take the Ashram’s dead for cremation. She said that no ceremonies were to be performed but only this mantra was to be repeated a hundred and twenty times. It must have provided to the soul parted from the body a new body of subtle vibrations building, as it were, an Aurobindonian embrace shielding it from whatever adversary would come out of the unknown. Then nothing would obstruct it from reaching its place of divine repose before the next embodied entry into life’s battle on earth.

I have heard of Vipasana meditation and I dare say it is an interesting practice—attending to one’s inhalation and exhalation—but what about the content of the consciousness at the time? Is only one-pointedness of the mind the aim? Japa, with which you want me to compare or contrast it, would mean concentration on the chosen deity whose name is being repeated. Naturally it would start a movement of *bhakti*, devotion. I don’t suppose any deity-name is associated with the act of breathing in and breathing out.

In Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga there is no specific place for breath-practice or name-repetition, though nothing that may help a particular individual is ruled out. No special posture of the body is recommended, either. In the early days Sri Aurobindo used to do his sadhana walking 7 or 8 hours a day! We start straight with the consciousness. Just yesterday I read the Mother’s answer to a question put by a very young man many years ago. He asked: “What is real meditation?” She replied: “It is an active and deliberate concentration on the Divine Presence

and a sustained, alert contemplation of that Sublime Reality ”

To me personally, meditation in its essence and at its best means a state of unforced inwardness, with eyes open or shut, in which, against a background of wide tranquillity, there is a flow of consciousness from the depth of the heart towards the Divine Presence whose visible form was Sri Aurobindo or the Mother—a flow from a Divine Presence itself hidden in that depth. Its effect is felt in the whole being, including the body, as a warm, pervasive, quiet, consecrated happiness ready to receive whatever gift of Grace comes from within, around or beyond (25 8 1992)

AMAL KIRAN  
(K D SETHNA)

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## FROM ILLNESS TO HEALTH

### TWO UNCOMMON INSIGHTS

THE catch in our breath when we are startled, the tension in our guts when we're worried, the exhaustion we feel from our anxiety, are as much a part of our illnesses as are the bacteria and viruses which attack us—and can, in fact, be just as debilitating, just as deadly.

DR. RONALD GLASSER

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Over 2,000 years ago Aristotle described the habit of laughter as “a bodily exercise precious to health ” And philosophers and psychiatrists from Plato to Freud agree that the act of laughter is characterized by a sudden release of tension. Few activities can produce such wide-spread beneficial effects. Laughter aids digestion by increasing glandular secretion, relaxes the muscles and brings a blush to the skin and a sparkle to the eyes. “I've seldom been called upon to help a person who had a sense of the ridiculous,” one psychiatrist observed, “and I've *never* had to treat anyone who could really laugh at himself.”

DONALD NORFOLK

## SRI AUROBINDO—AS I HAVE SEEN HIM

THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF A BENGALI BROADCAST ON RADIO  
CALCUTTA ON SRI AUROBINDO'S BIRTHDAY ON 15 AUGUST 1992

I HAVE seen Him, heard His voice, have served Him, received His Grace and have lived with Him day and night for twelve momentous years. I have observed in those days all His outer life, steady and unhasting, poised and serene, everything emerging from a wide consciousness—an impersonal supreme Purusha. I have had the firm conviction that He was not a human being; He was the One who had taken up a human body: *mānusiṃ tanuṃ āśritam*.

In the month of November 1938, He stumbled and fell down in His own room at night and received a severe injury on His right knee. As a result the thigh bone snapped into two. A few disciples were called to His presence in that emergency. His seclusion came to an end and we had the privilege of attending on Him year after year. Two of us from among the rest were whole-time attendants, myself as a 'medical disciple', the other as Sri Aurobindo's personal attendant. In addition to my medical duty I had the opportunity to serve Him in His literary works as well when His eyesight began to fail. I was chosen as His scribe during the time He was composing His great epic *Savitri*. It was an unforgettable boon given to me.

Before this time I was in charge of the Ashram Dispensary. In my leisure hours I used to indulge in literary pursuits, as a part of sadhana. I started writing Bengali and English poetry with Sri Aurobindo's power of inspiration to help me in this quixotic venture, for I had never attempted it before, though I had a taste for literature. He used to see my juvenile oddities, particularly in my English composition. He would train my ear to the sound of words, diction and the movement of metre and rhythm; in short, He initiated me in the art of composition. Moreover, He gave me the freedom to correspond with Him on various subjects, mundane and spiritual to help me develop my intellectual power, not in the spirit of a hard taskmaster but as an indulgent and understanding friend. Thus a close intimacy grew up between the Guru and the disciple; light and laughter, mild rebuke on the part of the Master and almost unchartered freedom given to the disciple—these two combined in a happy union taught me to love the Guru. Fear, awe, secrecy and other mental, vital frailties were transformed by His divine love into a frank and open psychic bond. Such a unique relation between Guru and Shishya seems unheard of in spiritual history; specially the fact that when the Guru seated in the highest pinnacle of the Supermind could be at once a humorist took people by happy surprise.

Now I shall briefly describe what I have seen of Him with my outer perceptions during those twelve years. After having established a close intimacy with the Guru through correspondence, when I met Him face to face, I was

overwhelmed. What a glowing body, soft and tender yet quite massive, long hair and beard tinged with gold and silver, deep soft gaze, an affable mien, brightening with a pure detached humour! The Gita's equality was the hall-mark of all His demeanour and action

I have seen Him in His various aspects. When the fracture of the thigh bone caused Him intense pain and He was confined to bed, He remained calm and still, almost silent and indrawn. After the recovery, we have seen Him in the early hours of the morning a solemn figure absorbed in a contemplation beyond our ken. And when He was immersed in writing He forgot time and space. The Mother coming with a drink stood by His side watching Him with a sweet smile. Cold and heat, food and sleep and bath—these physical necessities were reduced to a minimum. He has said to us apropos of them and other human interests: "I have nothing human in me."

When in 1927-1938 He was living in seclusion, He used to write answers to His disciples' questions for 8-9 hours at night and early morning, keeping Himself in this way in contact with them. At that time, I asked Him, "Is there a place in your yoga regarding the question of India's Independence?" He wrote back: "All that is settled. India's independence is inevitable. What she will do with her independence is a matter not yet settled. Goonda Raj, Bolshevik Raj, corruption? Things are ominous."

During the last World War we saw Him concerned with the destiny of India and the world, but free from the slightest ripple of anxiety or worry of any kind. When all Europe and parts of Asia were gripped in terror, Sri Aurobindo was watching everything from His seclusion. He was seeing Hitler's rise like a meteor and his triumphal march across Europe, his demoniac hunger to swallow all in his way and establish a German hegemony over the world. Sri Aurobindo gave a call to the nations and to India to unite all their forces and stand against this terrible menace. That is why He asked India to side with the Allies. But He Himself was unperturbed, free from all fear. Even when the disciples were shaken, Sri Aurobindo's voice resounded: "Is Hitler immortal? The Divine is not cowed down by Hitler." During our attendance on Him we used to look forward to an occasion when Sri Aurobindo would come down from His empyrean and spend some relaxed evenings with us. At that time we had the freedom to talk about all subjects, spiritual and mundane, personal, universal and transcendent. And we were struck with wonder how He gave solutions to all problems in a few words. He would not mind our questions, be they serious, foolish, ignorant or trifling or even challenging His own views. Our aim was to draw Him out and share precious gems of knowledge which were stored in His encyclopaedic vastness. We have been rapturously astonished to see that a Yogi and Rishi living in seclusion could yet be in touch with all world-events, at the same time possessing all knowledge beyond the universe (and that He was occupied with establishing a harmony between the two planes). That is the

special feature of His integral yoga: to establish a harmony between the two planes. In fact all world-movements were reflected in His divine consciousness. The subjects round which the main points of our discussion revolved were: His life-stories, Yoga, Supermind, World War, India's independence, literature.

The special feature in these talks was that they were carried on in a calm impersonal way. He would discuss, analyse things like a historian in a dispassionate manner without looking at any individual and enliven the talks with a piquant humour, a characteristic of the British temperament, I suppose, perhaps acquired during His stay in England from His seventh to His twenty-first year. His dealings with us were always sweet and sunny, as if we were His comrades. But we used to see a different picture during the darshan times. His own Swarupa would emerge and we would be blessed with the vision of the Golden Purusha of the Upanishadic lore. Perhaps Tagore had an inkling of this Purusha when he met Sri Aurobindo in 1928 and cried out, "You have the Word. Through your Word India will send an invitation to the world! Hearken, O Sons of Immortality—*śṛṅvantū viśve amṛtasya putrā...*"

Now we come to Politics and some events connected with the War. About the Cripps Offer: when He sent a disciple-emissary to the Congress leaders in Delhi asking them to accept it, the emissary came back disappointed. Sri Aurobindo commented: "I knew it." "Then why did you send him?" we asked. He answered with a smile, "I have done a bit of *niṣkāma karma*." Many leaders have realised their mistakes later on. Apropos we remember during the Mahabharata War Sri Krishna also gave the same reply when he came back with his peace-offer rejected by the Kauravas. But Sri Aurobindo did not stop helping India and the world with His spiritual force.

When Hitler swollen with pride and power declared that on the 15th August, Sri Aurobindo's birthday, he would proclaim from the Buckingham Palace his victory over England, freedom's last bastion against him, Sri Aurobindo remarked, "This shows that he is an Asura." But on this very day an exceptionally big contingent of his Luftwaffe (Air Force) was destroyed. Daily Sri Aurobindo used to get news of Hitler's war-movements and discuss with us that dictator's aim and purpose and how they could be checkmated or foiled. When the final blow came, Sri Aurobindo remained as calm and equal as ever.

Though the entire world was caught in this dire conflagration, Sri Aurobindo went on with His daily work. We have seen Him writing and rewriting *The Life Divine*. Day after day chapter after chapter was getting finished; words, insights, ideas were pouring down and waiting to be given an epic structure. The Mother has said that during the time when He published His philosophical review *The Arya* all His compositions would come down from above through a silent mind and He had only to type them out. We had the

<sup>1</sup> "Disinterested action"



opportunity to see this phenomenon with our own eyes. Beyond all, what has enchanted me was when He was dictating *Savitri*. Once about 400 lines He dictated at a stretch in a slow, deliberate rhythm and they needed no revision. These lines reached the *ne plus ultra* of poetry.

He was reticent and grave by nature, but on the other hand replete with wit and humour when He corresponded with us. Let us quote a few examples:

*Disciple*: The result of the last Darshan was not very happy. Difficulties of the individual nature were rushing up?

*Sri Aurobindo*: Individual and general. The subconscious, sir, the subconscious. Brilliant irruptions of the subterranean Brahman into the dullness of the ordinary life, অবচেতনায় ব্রহ্মণে নমো নমঃ (adoration to the subconscious Brahman). [He wrote it in Bengali script.]

*Disciple*: My eyes always remain watery

*Sri Aurobindo*. Virgil had eyes like that, while Horace used to breathe hard. Once Mycaenus, the great patron of literature in the reign of Augustus Caesar, was sitting between the two poets and said, "I am sitting between sighs and tears."

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*Disciple*: The divine psychic being is like a dictator

*Sri Aurobindo*: No, he is rather like a constitutional monarch.

*Disciple*: But he always remains hidden

*Sri Aurobindo*. That is because he waits for the consent of his cabinet members.

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A Tantric-cum-astrologer after reading Sri Aurobindo's horoscope seems to have said that in 1947 he would become "the unchallenged sovereign of the whole world."

*Sri Aurobindo*: 1947? Then I will do things quicker than Hitler! (*Turning to Dr. Manilal, a visitor disciple*) What post will you have, Manilal?

*Dr. Manilal*: Nothing, Sir.

*Sri Aurobindo*: No, you must have something to do.

*Manilal*: I'll be at your feet, Sir, humbly.

*Sri Aurobindo*: I'll make you the Chief of the World Medical Service

When India became free in 1947 Trichinopalli Radio asked for a message from Sri Aurobindo. He agreed and when that message was broadcast, it struck everybody as something unique, a tremendous testament of faith. Sri Aurobindo began to dictate the message in a quiet clear voice and started in this way.

“15th August 1947 is the birthday of free India . 15th August is also my own birthday and it is naturally gratifying to me that it should have assumed this vast significance I take this coincidence, not as a fortuitous accident, but as the sanction and seal of the Divine Force that guides my steps on the work with which I began my life, the beginning of its full fruition.” Then Sri Aurobindo mentioned His five dreams one after the other. In the very first one He emphasised with great force that divided India must become one. The rest of the dreams are well-known but what He said about the future of India—that India will be the spiritual Guru of the world—has not even been imagined by any other Indian leaders. About the future of the human race His dream is beyond our imagination.

The prophecy by Chitta Ranjan Das about Him is gradually becoming a fact

Then things took suddenly a most regrettable turn. When He was advancing towards His goal after awakening in us great hope and aspiration—the Mother used to see the descent of the Supramental Light whenever she visited Sri Aurobindo’s room—He suddenly disappeared from the earth-scene. We were plunged into an overwhelming gloom But lo and behold, a wonderful miracle took place. We saw that Sri Aurobindo’s entire body had been suffused with a crimson-golden Light My grief vanished and left in its place an ecstatic delight. That Light remained for five days It kept the body fresh and intact for 120 hours. The Government doctor and other high officials and innumerable visitors were witness to this amazing utter lack of physical deterioration in a tropical climate.

Our firm faith and belief was that Sri Aurobindo by His own unparalleled sacrifice had brought down into matter the supramental consciousness—which was the main purpose of His Sadhana. That Power is now secretly but infallibly acting all over the world and will one day be an openly realised fact. This is our hope. Sri Aurobindo has promised to the Mother that till this work is done He will be near us on the subtle-physical plane and will help us from there He has built His residence on that plane and we visit Him at times in our dreams.

Sri Aurobindo has said: “It is only the divine Love which can bear the burden I have to bear, that all have to bear who have sacrificed everything else to the one aim of uplifting the earth out of its darkness towards the Divine. The Gallo-like *Je m’en fiche*-ism (I don’t care) would not carry me one step; it would certainly not be divine. It is quite another thing that enables me to walk unweeping and unlamenting towards the goal ”

Finally the idol that will shine ever most bright in the temple of our inner consciousness is that of the calm, steady, impersonal Sri Aurobindo of unbounded peace and infinite compassion.

This is Sri Aurobindo as I have seen Him with my outer eye and inner

feeling, but who has known what He is except the Mother? One who has said:

My consciousness climbed like a topless hill

or

I have drunk the Infinite like a giant's wine

will remain a baffling mystery to our human measure.

NIRODBARAN

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## THE WARRIOR

FOR 25 NOVEMBER 1992

Up or down,  
 Though the going be tough,  
 Though the road be rough,  
 Never will he frown.

Surely the gods admire  
 This quenchless fire—  
 As heavy odds he would fight  
 Armed with a smile,  
 And always paint  
 With hues varied and bright  
 The twin canvases  
 Of literature and life,  
 Girdled with the Mother's Grace  
 And Sri Aurobindo's Light.

SHYAM KUMARI

## SOME EPISODES FROM THE LIFE OF “AN EXTRAORDINARY GIRL”

A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION

*(Continued from the issue of January 1993)*

### My Elder Uncle

BEFORE I start the subject, let me narrate a small experience which will show how the Guru's protection is always with me, and with others too though we are not aware of it.

I have told you that I suffer from chronic stomach trouble. The astrologer who predicted my future had warned me that this trouble would be with me even in my old age. Any slight indiscretion in diet upsets the stomach and choleralike diarrhoea makes my body and nerves completely exhausted. I have to keep some drugs with me that check the disease. One day a friend told me about a drug which would be very effective in this condition. It was available in the shops. I bought some pills and took two of them at the onset of the diarrhoea. When I was due to take the third one, I saw in a dream our doctor telling me, “Don't take those pills. They will have a serious effect on you.” Next morning I went to the doctor with the medicine and told him the story. On seeing the medicine, he cried out, “Good Lord, you would have lost your eyes if you had taken this drug. It has been proscribed by the Government. I don't know how it is being sold still.”

Now about the uncle. He is very clever, practical and conscientious regarding others' affairs, but about his own he is extremely careless. He loses his money and things often without knowing it. His wife would boss over him and make him do her will in all matters big and small. One day I told him, “Why do you accept all this hectoring from your wife in such a sheepish manner? You are a man, after all; why should she lead you by the nose?”

“What can I do?” he replied humbly, “She won't do a thing!”

“Then you have to tell her that you are the master of the house. If she doesn't cook, go to a restaurant and have your meal there. Do this once or twice and she will fall at your feet.”

In this way, I have straightened his backbone to some extent. His wife was very jealous of me, for his docility towards me. One day she came to my house and asked why he was so docile to me.

“Why do you ask?” I countered. “You think we are lovers?”

“No, I don't think so.”

“Listen,” I said, “I have no such feelings towards him, I can assure you. He is a good man. I have no guardian who could help me in my worldly affairs in

which I am extremely ignorant and inexperienced. He is of great help to me in these matters and he is a very good man. You know that.”

“Yes, I know.”

“Then why this jealousy?”

She could not answer. Very probably because he did so much for me and not for her, this she could not bear, which was quite natural.

When the wife went to Bombay, he would not call her back.

Now let me recount the small story of how he rendered me help in a trivial matter which appeared to me serious. My mother and myself used to sleep together and go on talking till midnight. One night, I felt a salty taste in my mouth. I slipped into the bathroom and found that blood was oozing out. I got a fright, I called my son who was sleeping in the next room. He too became nervous. Our whispers and noise woke up mother. Seeing fresh blood leaking from the mouth, she said, “Call the uncle.” I said, “No, we shouldn’t disturb him at this hour of the night.

But they insisted. He was telephoned and my son went to fetch him in his car. What he did was so simple. He brought out two big pieces of ice from the fridge and applied them on my chest and back, and gave me some ice to suck. I had done that before without any effect. But uncle’s treatment had a quick result; the blood flow stopped. Next day the doctor was called. His examination yielded no clue. There was no sign of T.B. Later, an X-ray revealed that there was something like a hole in the left lung. The doctor said that blood might have oozed out from that suspected spot.

*(To be continued)*

NIRODBARAN

# THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of January 1993)

## The Mother's Message

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



THE New Year began with this message from the Mother to all:

“We thirst for perfection. Not this human perfection which is a perfection of the ego and bars the way to the divine perfection. But that one perfection which has the power to manifest upon earth the Eternal Truth.”

The Mother and I were engrossed in our *Savitri*-paintings. I was reading, writing, typing, painting until the small hours of the morning.

It was an immense joy to work with the Mother. I marvelled at her practicality, refinement, aesthetic sense—mere words cannot do justice to her aristocracy, nobility and greatness.

I relished her sparkling sense of humour time and again. For example, she explained to me how to paint picture two of Book One Canto Three:

“Original and supernal Immanence  
Of which all Nature’s...mortal scheme ”

“Child, show in your painting how Aswapathy receives the divine light from above by stretching his two arms so that the light falls in his two palms.”

I did the painting with full enthusiasm and took it to the Mother. She looked at it for a second or two and then burst out laughing. I was puzzled and wondered what there was to laugh about. Then she said, still laughing.

“My child, here you have shown Aswapathy balancing two white sticks on his palms. Do you think he is giving a performance in a circus by balancing the sticks?”

Then it was my turn to laugh.

This very picture she made me do twice over till she was satisfied with it. For one particular colour she sent me a pale-turquoise transparent paper-weight. After I had finished the painting she asked me to keep the paper-weight.

Here is another episode of her humour:

Aswapathy is in his garden one morning, contemplating. He saw a strange light. It reminded him of Savitri’s great mission upon earth. It was obvious that he had forgotten all about it. When the Mother read the passage of this picture with a magnifying glass, she looked at me and said quietly:

“Funny fellow, how could he forget what Savitri had come upon earth to do?”

And she laughed—I joined her. Her lively sense of humour appeared every now and then

Sri Aurobindo has written:

“I am not aware that highly evolved personalities have no sense of humour or how the person can be said to be integrated when this sense is lacking. ‘Looseness’ applies only to a frivolous levity without any substance behind it. There is no law that wisdom should be something rigidly solemn and without a smile.”

There are still many hilarious stories to be told but it is not possible to put them all here. But I cannot resist this one:

When we were working on Book Three—*The Book of the Divine Mother*—in one of the paintings we had to show the Divine Mother in Aswapathy's heart. The Mother said with an amused smile:

“Child, if we show the Supreme Mother's face in his heart, then surely people will think that Aswapathy has fallen in love with a woman. So I think it is better if we show a golden and white Light enveloping Aswapathy.”

And she laughed sweetly. She really had a sense of humour which I loved immensely.

\*

The Mother explained to me painting No. three from the spiritual and occult point of view. These lines of Book One Canto Three correspond with the painting:

“A Seer was born, a shining Guest of Time.  
For him mind's... into the Unknown.”

She revealed:

“There are actually twelve bodies in the human being. I go out of my physical body—then leaving one body after another of the twelve within I enter the subtle worlds and come back gradually to the world of Matter—that is to say, the physical body.

“I become aware of all the details of my bodies before I finally come back.”

\*

Painting No. six of Book One Canto Five was extremely tough, because to bring out the accurate colours of the twelve realms was no joke.

If I write here all the descriptions of this particular painting and the explanations given to me by the Mother in detail it will take a whole book!

In short, the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is based on these very gradations of Consciousness.

The Mother disclosed the truths of all that she had seen and experienced in those different-coloured spheres by assuming bodies of different colours. This was when she was practising Occultism in Algeria under the guidance of Mr. Théon and his English wife Alma.



For instance, when she went into the Higher Mind she would assume a pale blue body. Similarly she would do with other realms.

In each realm there dwell typical beings.

I was young and so eager to learn from the Mother about the occult worlds—I was like a sponge soaking up every drop of divine teaching and tried to learn well. I may certainly not claim that I have grasped cent per cent—but surely one per cent! When the Mother revealed to me something, she gave at the same time her Force to realise that truth. I felt lifted up on the wings of enchantment and gratitude

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On the flyleaf of *Savitri*—the book we always kept in her music-cum-interview room in the cupboard she had given to me to keep the several things needed for our work on *Savitri*—the Mother wrote:

“A mon cher petit collaborateur  
Avec toute ma tendresse ”

“To my dear little collaborator  
With all my love.”

During that period I told the Mother: “I do not read many books of Sri Aurobindo.” She said:

“Don’t break your head over those books. Concentrate only on *Savitri*.”

Much later when I was doing research work on *Savitri* I had to read many times Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s books. Apart from this I read numerous books of renowned writers and poets. I also read Kalidasa in Sanskrit as well as a translation of him in English

I wanted to learn more music both vocal and instrumental, for I had passed my advanced examinations in both many years back in Rajkot. My physical mother was anxious that my younger sister and I should learn music, Hindi and Sanskrit. I was doing my Senior Cambridge in East Africa. I had to give up my studies there and come to India to learn about Indian culture. I passed my Matriculation exam in Rajkot and joined a college for several months. Then back to Africa. From there I travelled to England and the Continent in 1952.

I expressed my wish to learn music. The Mother said:

“No, my child, pay exclusive attention to *Savitri*.”

I wanted to learn sculpture. The Mother disagreed:

“No, it will spoil your hands—it has to do with a material thing—clay. It is better for you not to touch it.”

I said: “All right, Mother. But then what should I do after I have finished the paintings of the whole of *Savitri*?” She answered sweetly:

“The new work of *Savitri* is being prepared for you.”

In one of her letters dated 2.11.1962 the Mother wrote:

“We have big work to do together and *will do it*.  
With *all my love*.”

\*

This is another of her letters dated 13.5 63:

“Dear little child of mine.

Sri Aurobindo has written most wonderfully—all that can be said on *Savitri*—I have nothing to add to it. But surely I shall help you to do all the paintings with the proper inspiration.”

Nevertheless, the Mother has written many letters to me on *Savitri*.

Indeed, Inspiration simply gripped me and drove me once it was invoked.

Here I recalled the day when I was doing the paintings of Book Eleven—*The Book of Everlasting Day*—I invoked Inspiration late at night. I did eleven paintings overnight—at a stretch. In a jiffy I could finish them! I totally forgot my existence!

The next morning I found blisters on my fingers and realised the work of the divine Inspiration using my hands only!

For those paintings the Mother remarked:

“Child, you have done exactly what Sri Aurobindo meant and wrote in the Epic.”

The following morning she sent me a card accompanied by these words:

“The Light, the Peace and the Love of the Lord always.”

\*

Sometimes I read out the passages of *Savitri* to the Mother. She taught

me how to read *Savitri*—slowly, clearly.

The Mother wrote this letter to me dated 7.7.1965:

“Dear little child of mine.

You like to read *Savitri* to me and to say your feeling about it—this is quite all right—and I like your *understanding* of *Savitri*, which is also all right so everything is *all right* and you can be sure of my friendship.

LOVE.”

\*

The Mother arranged my reading *Savitri* with Amal Kiran (K D. Sethna) in 1962. Sri Aurobindo had first introduced *Savitri* to Amal in private drafts and written to him all the letters that are now published along with the Epic. Ambalal Purani went to the States. After he had returned from America, he passed away I finished reading with him the First Book of *Savitri*.

For the first time Amal and I met upstairs in the passage which connects the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s rooms. I casually asked him about a chessboard, because the Mother and I were doing something on that theme. He drew it and made me understand it.

When we started our reading of *Savitri*, some interested people warned Amal against me and asked him to stop reading with me. Amal cut them short by saying: “The Mother has arranged our reading. Besides, I have seen and felt Huta’s soul. I cannot back out ”

He made me understand *Savitri* intellectually and aesthetically.

During our reading in my apartment Chinmoy who is now in U.S.A. came to give me some white roses sent by the Mother. Many a time he brought the Mother’s letters. He used to work with Amrita, the General Manager of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. The Mother gave the letters and roses to Amrita who then passed them on to Chinmoy.

It was 7th August 1965 when I finished reading the whole of *Savitri* with Amal. I could not check my tears of joy. Amal too was moved. We shook hands over the long harmonious collaboration and the wonderful discussions.

That day in the afternoon I went to the Mother to inform her about it. She heaved a sigh of happiness and said:

“Ah, one great work is done.”

\*

When the paintings of the whole *Savitri* were over and they were exhibited in February 1967 along with the Mother’s sketches, the Mother praised me:

“Child, you have done nice work. The exhibition is a big success. Within ten years not only have you progressed outwardly but inwardly as well. You have achieved something. I am happy.

You can do beautiful things. Now everything will come to you automatically—naturally—without any effort.

The Lord wants you to paint the creation of the New World.

Now the Inspiration is constantly hovering over your head. When you invoke It, It will come down.”

\*

It was my sincere aspiration from my childhood that I should do something worthwhile in my life.

In 1965 I wrote to the Mother expressing my feeling that I did not want peace and happiness for myself alone but for the whole world. The Mother answered:

“I know that.  
Blessings.”

\*

In 1961 the Mother explained to me painting No. eight—of Book One Canto Five—“ ‘On one side a cradle and on the other a grave.’ In between there was only one path. Above there was a big white star. Human life runs from cradle to grave and after the grave there is re-birth and so again the cradle. None bothers to look up to the star!”

When the Mother saw the painting, I suddenly burst into tears. I sobbed heavily. The Mother with all her compassion tried to soothe me. Then after a few minutes I could speak: “Mother, I am not weeping for my own unhappiness and sorrow. But I am weeping for the whole of humanity. For they do not know that there is the Supreme Goal—the Divine—that there is an aim for their lives and that is to rise above the earth consciousness to the Eternal Consciousness. I am very sorry ”

Once again my eyes filled with tears.

The Mother was touched by my soul’s feeling. She took me into her arms and said:

“I know, my child ”

On one occasion I said to her: “Mother, I feel that I am a little better compared to most people because I have the flame of good will for all, burning

constantly within my heart.”

She at once responded:

“Yes, my child, I know, that is true.”

Then after a pause she added:

“Do you know, in the whole world there is a handful (*gesture*) of people who have good will and who want the Divine?”

“Good will” reminds me of the Mother’s words to Vasudha who was her personal attendant:

“True nobility, true superiority lies in good will.”

*(To be continued)*

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## THE SPIRIT BEHIND

It is particularly important, for those of us who are involved in teaching Physical Education to students and others, to be transparently clear about the Ideal for which we exist.

When I started Physical Education here in the Ashram in 1945 the object was to provide health and physical fitness to our children and to develop in them certain moral and inner qualities that would be helpful in their integral life.

But the role of physical education became more clear and precise when Sri Aurobindo gave us the ideal in his message to us published in our first Bulletin in 1949:

“The perfection of the body, as great a perfection as we can bring about by the means at our disposal, must be the ultimate aim of Physical Culture. Perfection is a true aim of all culture, the spiritual and psychic, the mental, the vital, and it must be the aim of our physical culture also. If our seeking is for total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside; for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use, *śarīram khalu dharmasāadhanam*, says the old Sanskrit adage, the body is the means of fulfilment of dharma, and dharma means every ideal which we can propose to ourselves and the law of its working out and its action. A total perfection is the ultimate aim which we set before us, for our ideal is the Divine Life which we wish to create here, the life of the Spirit fulfilled on earth, life accomplishing its own Spiritual Transformation even here on earth in the condition of the material universe. That cannot be unless the body too undergoes a transformation, unless its action and functioning attain to a supreme capacity and the perfection which is possible to it or which can be made possible ”

This ideal then is the only *raison d'être* behind the existence of the Department of Physical Education. And to realise this ideal The Mother gave us all her help and guidance. Following is the process that I learnt from The Mother and I share it with you.

1. In this approach for the work of integral transformation, the first thing necessary is the True Consciousness. To be conscious first about the truth of our being—the psychic being. Then we have to know in detail the parts and activities of our complete being. Then with true knowledge and understanding we have to organise our mind, life and body with all their innumerable parts around this Central Truth. We have to train and educate ourselves to be guided only by the psychic inspiration.

The qualities which will help us in this process are faith, aspiration, devotion, sincerity and surrender. The result of the achievement will be that the psychic will express True Love. True Love which is the source of joy, is pure and desireless. It gives freely without any demand or bargain. Hatred and jealousy on the other hand destroy the body and have no part in this True Love.

2. The vital and the mind—the two great forces—must not rule over the body. Their excessive demands spoil the body with their ideas, their impulses and their desires. But cooperation of the mind and vital is essential for this work. They have to be taught and trained in the custom of discipline, obedience and order so that they become plastic and receptive enough to receive the higher light and allow it to make the necessary changes. This is a long process but with patience and perseverance the control is possible and the final achievement will be that the mind will express True Knowledge, the vital Indomitable Power and the physical will express Beauty in form and Beauty in action.

3. Growth of the body consciousness—“One development of utmost value is the awakening of the essential and instinctive body consciousness which can see and do what is necessary without any indication from mental thought and which is equivalent in the body to swift insight in the mind and spontaneous and rapid decision in the will,” says Sri Aurobindo. Through all sorts of games, sports and physical activities we aim to build up this body consciousness, leading to a gradual control, mastery and transformation of the body

4. Since the body is the main instrument of this work, it has to be protected and taken care of by an application of the knowledge of health, hygiene, physical exercises, preventive and curative medicine, etc. Basic knowledge of all the above subjects in theory and practice is an essential aid in the process of developing the ‘body consciousness’.

5. The body must be kept in a perfectly balanced state. With the proper amount of work and rest, food, exercise and sleep, it should always remain in a constant state of Sat-Chit-Ananda. Ananda is our prime mover—it is the rejuvenator and must saturate our whole physical being. The result of this achievement will be prolongation of youth and maintenance of health and physical fitness of the body for a very long period and to stop or slow down the process of deterioration finally leading to immortality.

This work therefore includes both the inner and the outer selves. To get guidance for the inner work, we have to come in contact with the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s pervading consciousness and their innumerable writings. For the outer work The Mother has organised the Ashram with all the different departments of Education for training the different parts of the being and the departments of work for having opportunities in the material field to express oneself through them.

So many times this thought comes that if we had been born in a certain epoch when humanity made a serious attempt to make a progress, we would have put out all our best to help in the cause and that way would have enjoyed ourselves in doing something truly worthy. Perhaps we were born at that time and made a good contribution for that cause.

But now a time has come when we are offered a most valued opportunity to do something for the progress of humanity. And this progress is extremely

important in the history of the world when a definite attempt and work is being done for changing the consciousness of man and making out of him a being which is a step further in the terrestrial evolution.

Therefore, with all conviction, I would say to my friends and colleagues that we are fortunate to be born in Sri Aurobindo's age and we have the special privilege of being chosen to do this work in this world. This can be a unique contribution on the part of physical education. I would go to the extent of saying that we stand alone as the only organisation in the educational scene which has the responsibility to teach physical education, leading to physical transformation.

Therefore, upon our shoulders falls the responsibility of developing in each boy and girl a will for physical fitness that will persist throughout their life. The coming generation should not be able to blame us that because of lack of our will, our small and limited vision, our lack of conviction for the ideal, lack of dedication and selflessness we could not exploit our cause sufficiently, we have not been able to do what we could have done.

PRANAB



## SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of January 1993)

THERE were three objectives in Sri Aurobindo's policy which he set forth in his paper, *Bande Mataram*. First, he kept the ideal of Independence constantly before the people. As early as September 1906, the theme of 'Absolute Swaraj' was uttered repeatedly in the pages of the *Bande Mataram* as well as in Sri Aurobindo's speeches, so that it might be fixed in the minds of the people. The concept of complete independence was revolutionary and very unfamiliar during that period when India was oppressed and enslaved by the alien rule and alien thought.

The second objective was to make the *Bande Mataram* the mouthpiece of the Nationalist Party. Through it he explained the ideals and programmes of the new movement, represented by the Party. He exposed the weaknesses of the other parties. He wanted the Nationalists to enlist popular support and then gain control over the Congress. According to Sri Aurobindo, "The New Thought holds and declares as a fundamental axiom of political philosophy that the countenance of foreign *predominance* or overlordship in any shape or form, political, industrial, intellectual, social or religious, is fatal to the continuance and growth of self-conscious life among a people subject to such overlordship; and the New Thought, therefore, asks—shall India be permitted to have an independent destiny which she would be at liberty to work out in her own way; or shall she be dragged at the chariot-wheels of a superior Power which shall dictate terms and conditions upon which she should be permitted to grow?"

On April 26, 1907, Sri Aurobindo wrote:

"The new movement is not primarily a protest against bad Government—it is a protest against the continuance of British control; whether that control is used well or ill, justly or unjustly, is a minor and unessential consideration. It is not born of a disappointed expectation of admission to British citizenship,—it is born of a conviction that the time has come when India can, should and will become a great, free and united nation. It is not a negative current of destruction, but a positive, constructive impulse towards the making of modern India. It is not a cry of revolt and despair, but a gospel of national faith and hope. Its true description is not Extremism, but Democratic Nationalism.

"These are the real issues. There are at present not two parties in India, but three,—The Loyalists, the Moderates and the Nationalists. The Loyalists would be satisfied with good Government by British rulers and a limited share in the administration; the Moderates desire self-government within the British Empire, but are willing to wait for it indefinitely; the Nationalists would be satisfied with nothing less than independence whether within the Empire, if that be possible, or outside it, they believe that the nation cannot and ought not to wait, but must

bestir itself immediately, if it is not to perish as a nation.”<sup>2</sup>

As we have already seen, in order to involve the people in the struggle of freedom Sri Aurobindo wrote a series of articles on Passive Resistance and Boycott, which we may consider the third objective of the *Bande Mataram*. Sri Aurobindo writes:

“The first principle of passive resistance, therefore, which the new school have placed in the forefront of their programme, is to make administration under present conditions impossible by an organised refusal to do anything which shall help either British commerce in the exploitation of the country or British officialdom in the administration of it,—unless and until the conditions are changed in the manner and to the extent demanded by the people. This attitude is summed up in the one word, Boycott.”<sup>3</sup>

Sri Aurobindo laid out the rationale of economic boycott in the following words: “We are dissatisfied with the fiscal and economical conditions of British rule in India, with the foreign exploitation of the country, the continual bleeding of its resources, the chronic famine and rapid impoverishment which result, the refusal of the Government to protect the people and their industries. Accordingly, we refuse to help the process of exploitation and impoverishment in our capacity as consumers, we refuse henceforth to purchase foreign and especially British goods or to condone their purchase by others. By an organised and relentless boycott of British goods, we propose to render the further exploitation of the country impossible.”<sup>4</sup>

Sri Aurobindo, through the columns of the *Bande Mataram*, kept up a constant stream of invigorating and inspiring comment on the movement. He saw in the boycott movement a potent weapon whereby it might be possible for India to shake off the British rule without a bloody revolution. Again, Sri Aurobindo in one of his speeches said: “On their fidelity to Swadeshi, to Boycott, to passive resistance rested the hope of a peaceful and spiritual salvation. On that it depended whether India would give the example unprecedented in history of a revolution worked out by moral force and peaceful pressure.”<sup>5</sup>

Boycott, as we have noted, involves abstaining from the purchase of foreign goods. But it does not mean that the people should be stopped for ever from consuming goods at present manufactured abroad. The logical corollary of boycott, therefore is *swadeshi*, the manufacture in one’s own country of all the goods that the people require. This obviously cannot be done overnight, in fact, it is a long and slow process, but the ideal of economic self-sufficiency is an essential counterpart of the theory of boycott. Sri Aurobindo puts it thus: “If we refuse to supply our needs from foreign sources, we must obviously supply them ourselves, we cannot have the industrial boycott without swadeshi and the expansion of indigenous industries.”<sup>6</sup>

The boycott had two great aims. The first was to shake the foundations of

British power in India, the second to bring about a rapid growth in industries for producing in India goods required by its people. Sri Aurobindo always stressed both the aspects. For him they were two sides of the same coin, boycott the negative side and *swadeshi* the positive. Thus he writes: "The first condition of a successful boycott, therefore, is the organisation of national industry with a view, first, to the improvement and extension of that which exists, secondly, to the opening up of new lines of enterprise."<sup>7</sup> Again he argues that "Boycott of foreign goods is a necessary condition for the encouragement of Swadeshi industries..."<sup>8</sup>

The boycott-*swadeshi* movement did lead to a remarkable spurt in indigenous industry; specially in such fields as textiles where a bonfire of Manchester and Lancashire cloth became a common sight throughout the country.

In *India's Fight for Freedom* by Haridas and Uma Mukherjee the authors say: "Swadeshi Movement, being at once a patriotic and an economic movement, gave a mighty stimulus not only to our political aspirations but also to the industrial regeneration of the country. The weaving industry of India in particular received the greatest impetus from the *swadeshi* movement. By systematic and relentless boycott of British cloth and by fostering and stimulating a temper for things *swadeshi*, the national movement of 1905 created in the country a tremendous demand for indigenous articles. As the demand for indigenous cloth grew, increasing attempts were made to start new mills. 1905, with Mr. R.C. Dutt as the president [of the first Indian Industrial Conference held at Benares], was a very significant step in the direction of focussing public attention on the immense prospects and possibilities of native industries and succeeded in inspiring their minds along the lines of constructive *swadeshi*."<sup>9</sup>

Obviously Sri Aurobindo's political concepts of boycott and *swadeshi* were closely linked, and he intuited that if both were successful the full political advantage would be forthcoming in the national struggle against foreign domination.

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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## SHAKESPEARE IN THE LIGHT OF SANSKRIT POETICS

SANSKRIT poetics, rich and complex as it is, has many branches or schools. The theory of Rasa is but one of the many time-honoured theories of dramatics and poetry. Like many other theories it can be traced back to Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, if not earlier, and since then it has developed and proliferated in the works of many later commentators and theorists. The Rasa theory is one which is applicable to all literary works irrespective of time and place and it is difficult to resist the temptation to apply it to the works of Shakespeare. Before we discuss his plays in the light of the Rasa theory, however, it is necessary for us to know the essential features of the theory itself.

One cannot do better than go to the very fountainhead of the theory, and see what Bharata has to say about Rasa. According to him, permanent emotions (*sthāyī bhāva*) become Rasa by being united with different emotions.<sup>1</sup> Rasa is not the taste itself, but that which is tasted in the experiencing of aesthetic pleasure in poetry. His cryptic pronouncements have been endlessly discussed and commented upon in the ensuing centuries. Scholars of different philosophical schools interpreted Bharata in the light of the doctrines they followed. Abhinavagupta,<sup>2</sup> for example, was a scholar of the Saiva-Advaita school and his interpretation of the rasa theory was steeped in this doctrine. His theories had been accepted by scholars till Panditraja Jagannatha gave an interpretation leaning towards Nyaya and Vedanta. The term "rasa" today, is understood in three different ways. It can mean:

- (a) artistic expression of emotion,
- (b) experiencing of poetic beauty based on emotion,
- (c) poetic beauty in general.<sup>3</sup>

The last meaning is not a scholarly one and is used by laymen. One can say that poetry is the artistic expression of emotion and rasa is the experiencing of that artistic beauty. Rasa, therefore, has two aspects—the objective one of poetic beauty based on emotions, and the subjective one of the reader's experience of that beauty. Abhinava says:

"There is identification and emotional rapport (*tadātmya*) between the feelings of the protagonist and the audience. This feeling is different from ordinary feelings as it is the result of indirect perception and also the direct perception of the spectator while he is in a state of detachment. This immediate experience of equilibrium is what is called rasa".<sup>4</sup>

Rasa, therefore, is intimately connected with emotions. Bhava or emotion has been given an objective basis in *nāṭyaśāstra*: it is that which explains the meaning of poetry to the discerning reader, including the different elements of poetry and those of drama. Sanskrit poetics does not deal with ordinary emotions, but with *sthāyī* or permanent and *sañcārī* or transient emotions. Permanent emotions exist in the individual's mind in the form of desires. They

exist without any causes whereas transient emotions depend on causes. These permanent emotions are related to the basic instincts of life and not subject to any accidental change. It is only these permanent emotions that can be universalized and can attain the state of *rasa*. Bharata includes *vibhāva* (determinant), *anubhāva* (consequent) and *vyābhicārī* (transitory) within *bhāva* (emotion). According to him there are eight *sthāyī* (permanent) *bhāvas*, thirty-three *sañcārīs* (transient), and eight *sāttvika*. As can be expected, the nature of the *bhāvas*, their number and categories have been endlessly discussed by later scholars.

Bharata gives us eight *rasas* based on these eight *sthāyīs*: *Śṛṅgāra* (the erotic), *Hāsyā* (the comic), *Karuna* (the pathetic), *Raudra* (the furious), *Vīra* (the heroic), *Bhayānaka* (the terrible), *Bībhatsa* (the odious), the *Adbhuta* (the marvellous). This classification is not an original one. Bharata himself mentions an ancient sage named Druhina, thus making it clear that this classification had already become a well-established one by his time.

Dandin, coming after Bharata, also mentions only eight *rasas*. It was Udbhava who added *Śānta* (quietude) as the ninth *rasa*. Many additions to these nine have been made by later scholars but most of them, after much discussion, have been rejected. Thus Rudrata had added *preyan*, with *sneha* as its permanent emotion. Mahimbhatta, the writer of the *Agni-Purana*, and Mammata discuss the *rasas*, but have nothing special to say about their numbers. Dhananjaya summarily dismisses *rasas* like *Mṛgayā* and *Aksa* as posited by some of his contemporaries.<sup>5</sup>

Abhinavagupta accepts *Śānta* very firmly, saying that there are nine *rasas*, neither more nor less. He admits that there are scholars who accept three other *rasas* besides these: *Sneha*, *Laulya* and *Bhakti*, but he himself does not accord them independent existence. Three others are mentioned by Ramchandra-Gunacandra: *Vyasana*, *Duhkha* and *Sukha*, but he is by no means very emphatic about giving them independent status. Viśvanātha Kavirāja accepts the nine *rasas* and insists on adding *Vātsalya*.<sup>6</sup>

Bhanudatta divides the *rasas* into two categories: *laukika* (ordinary) and *alaukika* (extraordinary). The *rasas* of the second group comprise three kinds: (a) *svapnika*, i.e. those derived from dreams (b) *manorathī*, i.e. derived from wishes, and (c) *aupanayika*—found in poetry and drama. Bhanudatta includes the nine *rasas* within this last category and adds *Vātsalya*, *Laulya*, *Bhakti*, *Kalpanā* and *Māyā* to the original nine.<sup>7</sup>

Rūpa Gosvāmī posits a very different categorisation. He was a devoted Vaiṣṇava scholar and his interpretation of the *rasa* theory is coloured by his religion. He declares *Bhakti* to be the most important *rasa*—all the others being contained within it. It is not necessary here to go into the details of his theory.

At present scholars accept the nine *rasas* as advocated by the last great Sanskrit scholar, Panditarāja Jagannātha.<sup>8</sup> He firmly upholds the traditional

categorisation. Of late some more rasas have been mentioned by modern writers. Bharatendu Harishchandra, for example, has argued the establishing of *Bhakti*, *Vātsalya*, *Sakhya* and *Pramod* as independent rasas. *Prakṛti* or *Udāta* rasa has been added by Ramchandra Shukla, *Deśa-bhakti* by Dr. Gulab Rai, *Krānti*, *Udvega* and *Prakṣova* have been invented by Marathi rhetoricians. The account given above is by no means exhaustive as there still remain many rasas that have been mentioned but not accepted by scholars. How many of these will endure remains to be seen.

The nature of the different rasas and their importance has also undergone continuous scrutiny. Different scholars give importance to different rasas. Thus Bhavabhuti pleads the cause of *Karuna* as the most important of all the rasas, and the others, he claims, originate from it. Four centuries later Abhinavagupta<sup>9</sup> establishes *Śānta* as the chiefest of all the rasas. At about the same time Bhoja emphatically declares the supremacy of *Śṛṅgāra*. Many other theorists and poets agree with him. The Vaishnava scholars on the other hand not only established *Bhakti* as a rasa but claim that it is the basic rasa and all the others have their origin in it.

Since there are so many rasas with their causes, effects and many other accompanying phenomena, and since they concern the poet, poetry and the reader, it is but natural that the experiencing of rasa would be highly complex, with pitfalls everywhere for the scholar and the critic. There are, for example, certain difficulties faced by the poet that often give rise to flaws in the communication of rasa. Some rasas can co-exist with others and sometimes they cannot. This is quite an intricate subject and different scholars give different charts about the relationship between the several rasas. When this relationship is not properly observed we have *rasa-virodha*, of different types. When the rasa-experience itself is imperfect we may have *rasa-vighna* and *rasābhāsa*. These, again, have several subdivisions, conditions and refutations. Different scholars have given meticulous classifications and analyses of these factors. Though one cannot set forth these arguments, it will be a serious omission if one does not mention the idea of *angi* rasa. Whenever any literary work contains many rasas in it, there is one rasa that dominates the entire work. This is called the *angi* rasa and all the others are subservient to it. The *angi* rasa of the *Rāmāyana*, for example, is *Karuna*. Bharata himself has mentioned *angi* rasa and later scholars also have discussed it. Anandavardhana firmly established the concept of *angi* or main rasa. Later on in relevant contexts attempts will be made to explain this idea somewhat more in detail.

(To be continued)

RATRI RAY

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## EMBRACE

IN some fiendish hour of fever and fright  
 I perceived the approach of a marvellous Friend  
 As if a winsome flower wafted into my sight  
 Shot from an unseen bow of Benignity.  
 He came, with moon-gold smile, raining unbearable bliss,  
 Vowed to salvage my storm-hit hope,  
 His lips stirred with an "I-am-here" refrain,  
 His eyes watching kindly my sorrowing self's mud-covered grope.  
 His hand, like a sudden ladder, leaned down from a rimless vast,  
 It plunged me into a mystic cavern, a tunnel towards light,  
 For me to carry the gift of aspiration's flame  
 With no my-ness uttering its name.  
 Often I have betrayed my Friend with self-pride  
 And buried his memory in the dust,  
 Still a benison follows me on with unfailing trust  
 To meet me somewhere beyond thought's regime,  
 A warm and wide Embrace closes in from every side.

SEIKH ABDUL KASAM

# QUANTUM AND THE ENORMOUS CHANGE

(Continued from the issue of January 1993)

## Assessment of Copernicus's Work

It is necessary to assess the contribution of Copernicus in its historical-social context as well as in the context of the part played by it in future developments. This will enable us to understand the enormous change it introduced in our pattern of thinking and at the same time to recognise the path it paved for a rationalistic outlook on life. *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, looks at the work of Copernicus as follows:

“The Copernican system . . . placed the sun close to the center of the universe and the earth in orbit around the center. . . [in that process his theory also changed the earlier] piecemeal approach forever. He effected a Kantian revolution in astronomy perhaps even more than Kant effected a Copernican revolution in philosophy. Copernicus relocated the primary observational problem, that of explaining the apparent retrograde motions of the planets, by construing the motions not as something the planets ‘really’ did ‘out there,’ but as the result of our own motion. . .

“Copernicus was led to conclude that, in view of the plethora of epicycles required by the Ptolemaic system to account for the observed motion of the heavenly bodies, it must contain some basic error. He found that the assumption of a moving earth, however absurd and counterintuitive it appeared, led to a much simpler and aesthetically superior system. . .

“Fundamentally, then, Copernicus argued that the observational intricacies of planetary motion were not real, but merely apparent. This argument made planetary motion simpler to comprehend but our own motion more intricate and therefore harder to believe. . .

“Copernicus’s scheme is systematically simpler. It required more independent concepts than some others, but these were deductively interlocked. Copernicus was astronomy’s Euclid. He constructed out of the disconnected parts of astronomy . . . a systematic monument of scientific theory. What Euclid had done for geometry, and what Newton was later to do for physics, Copernicus did for positional astronomy. . .

“The implications of Copernicanism can hardly be exaggerated. Even religious revolutionaries such as Luther and Melancthon came to view Copernicus’s position with abhorrence. His views challenged the literal interpretation of Scripture, the philosophical and metaphysical foundations of moral theory, and even common sense itself. The result was a massive opposition, learned and lay, to the reported ideas of Copernicus. It was the slow, sure



acceptance of the technical *De Revolutionibus* by natural philosophers that ultimately quieted the general clamour against heliocentricism. Without the riotous reaction against it, Copernicus's book might have been but a calm contribution to scholarship. In the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, however, the name Copernicus became a battle cry against the establishments in religion, in philosophy, and in natural science....

"Copernicus epitomized the well-trained, thorough, and rigorous sixteenth-century natural philosopher. He sought to make the theories he had inherited work better than when he found them... [He] was presented with a theory that was incapable of further internal revision and improvement. The only recourse was fundamental overhaul."

Such indeed was the impact of Copernicus's work on the thinking of the leaders of the time.

T Kuhn speaks of the upheaval, in astronomical and cosmological thought, in the wake of the publication of Copernicus's work in 1543.

"In its consequences the *De Revolutionibus* is undoubtedly a revolutionary work. From it derive a fundamentally new approach to planetary astronomy, the first accurate and simple solution of the problem of the planets, and ultimately, with other fibers added to the pattern, a new cosmology. The *De Revolutionibus* itself, in terms of its consequences, is a relatively staid, sober, and unrevolutionary work. Most of the essential elements by which we know the Copernican Revolution—easy and accurate computations of planetary position, the abolition of epicycles and eccentrics, the dissolution of the spheres, the sun a star, the infinite expansion of the universe—these and many others are not to be found anywhere in Copernicus's work. In every respect except the earth's motion the *De Revolutionibus* seems more closely akin to the writings of the succeeding generations who based their work upon Copernicus's and who made explicit the radical consequences that even its author had not seen in his work.. .

"As a whole the *De Revolutionibus* stands almost entirely within an ancient astronomical and cosmological tradition; yet within its generally classical framework are to be found a few novelties which shifted the direction of scientific thought in ways unforeseen by its author and which gave rise to a rapid and complete break with the ancient tradition ..

"In an honest appraisal of contemporary astronomy, Copernicus shows that the earth-centered approach to the problem of the planets is hopeless. The traditional techniques of Ptolemaic astronomy have not and will not solve that problem, instead they have produced a monster; there must, he concludes, be a fundamental error in the basic concepts of traditional planetary astronomy. For the first time a technically competent astronomer had rejected the time-honored scientific tradition for reasons internal to his science and this professional awareness of technical fallacy inaugurated the Copernican Revolution. ..

"The earth's motion had never been a popular concept, but by the sixteenth

century it was scarcely unprecedented. What was unprecedented was the mathematical system that Copernicus built upon the earth's motion. With the possible exception of Aristarchus, Copernicus was the first to realize that the earth's motion might solve an existing astronomical problem or indeed a scientific problem of any sort. Even including Aristarchus, he was the first to develop a detailed account of the astronomical consequences of the earth's motion. Copernicus's mathematics distinguish him from his predecessors, and it was in part because of the mathematics that his work inaugurated a revolution."

From the above it is clear that, by the time Copernicus came on the scene, the Ptolemaic astronomy had exhausted itself to the very last point; the system had become acutely complex in its quantitative details with several errors and inaccuracies in it. Reasons, as Kuhn says, internal to science only, could solve the problem of the planets and Copernicus, one of the "pioneers of perspective", achieved this by consciously proposing a heliocentric model. In *The Ascent of Man*, J. Bronowski expresses his belief that "there were good Renaissance reasons, emotional rather than intellectual reasons, that made him choose the golden sun" as the centre of the universe. Nevertheless, by transposing the motion of the sun to the earth he recast the traditional notions of planetary and cosmological studies and built the necessary mathematics to work out his proposal. Here we have a good non-emotional reason too. He had thus set in a revolution in astronomy and in all its adherent sciences. But what should be particularly noted is that his unprecedented mathematics marked a crucial break which in later times became instrumental in bringing about Kepler's elliptical orbits and Newton's Gravity.

The epicyclic system was replaced by circular orbits which later on were modified to elliptical orbits. But then one may well wonder whether the use of these orbits would have worked to solve the problems in the exhausted Ptolemaic system! The possibility cannot be simply brushed aside as a fanciful thought and demands a consideration, if the needed accuracy could be obtained in this manner, astronomy would follow a different course and the Copernican sun-centered model would find no justified place in the subsequent developments. Aestheticity and simplicity are not always proper criteria in our evaluation of a professional theory. Quantitative agreement with observation must alone hold any scientific proposal.

(To be continued)

VIKAS DHANDHANIA

# THE ANCIENT FORMULA OF FREEDOM

## 1. The Vedic View

THE desire to conquer death is perhaps as old as humanity itself. The hymns of the Veda, the earliest among the extant documents on human civilisation, speak of two solutions, one is to go beyond death and the other is to eliminate death, *atimrtyu* and *amrtam*.

Broadly, there are two forms of physical death—death at the end of living a full life and death after a brief span of life. As a result of prolonged use the body becomes an ineffective instrument at old age. And it is but natural that it falls like a dry leaf and perishes. On the contrary, to die before attaining old age is unnatural and therefore an issue to be seriously viewed and a problem to be resolved. In fact in the Veda physical death generally signifies this death, death brought about by factors that abridge the full term of physical life. As the other death is natural and inevitable, the Veda accepts it as the law of physical life and leaves it at that. To overcome the limitation of short life, *alpāyuh*, by living a full life, *dīrghāyuh*,<sup>1</sup> is an ideal upon which the hymns of Veda frequently lay emphasis. They speak of keeping death at a great distance and of living a long-extended life here “Give us a hundred autumns in our life time”.<sup>2</sup> “Do not break the natural cycle of life”<sup>3</sup> “May you proceed forward effacing the footsteps of death and prolonging your span of life”.<sup>4</sup> “May they live a hundred autumns, active and usefully engaged; may they keep death from them, hidden behind the ridge, *śatam jīvantu saradaḥ purucīr-antar-mrtyum dadhatām parvateṇa*”<sup>5</sup> To live a hundred autumns, a hundred years, a full life in the body is therefore offered as the means of going beyond death, *atimrtyu*.

In the view of the Veda man is mortal indeed, but within the mortal is seated an imperishable and immortal God—it is Agni, the immortal in mortals, *martyes-vamrta*.<sup>6</sup> He is a mighty divine child who has made the human body his womb and is obscured by the dense layers of inner and outer existence. Man becomes immortal by opening himself to this divine Inhabitant and manifesting His law of immortal existence in his inner as well as outer self, *svadhāvān*.<sup>7</sup> By putting on the immortal law of Agni he becomes a master of the gated house *i.e.*, the body in which he lives, *grhapath*.<sup>8</sup> He may live in the body or leave it after living a full hundred years, but he is not limited either by life or by death. This is the significance of immortality. To become immortal is the work of works in which the seers of the Veda are ceaselessly engaged, *amrtam duhānāh*.<sup>9</sup> For to reach Agni and grow into his immortal felicity is the supreme wealth that one should desire to possess. Time and again the hymns refer to this wealth. “Agni the mighty one seated in the light, full of bliss, the holder of treasure, the continent of the riches”<sup>10</sup> “Do thou give us the thousandfold treasure”<sup>11</sup> “O thou of many lights, join us to the large and glorious riches that create the Bliss”<sup>11</sup>

We must note that a full life upon earth is absolutely necessary for becoming a doer of great work, *sukṛtaḥ*,<sup>12</sup> the work of reaching the immortal God and manifesting the divine law of existence in the world. At the same time to live a full life without realising immortality is not the highest goal of human life. For the seer of the Veda living a full life is incomplete without the realisation of immortality. He says: "Just as a cucumber, separated from the risk of falling from its stalk and dying on account of unfavourable circumstances, attains full growth and becomes a ripe fruit, so also may I be separated from the bonds of death and live to a ripe old age. But at the same time may I be not separated from immortality as if I desire nothing else except a prolonged life in the body, *urvārukamiva bandhanān-mṛtyor-muksiya māmrtāt*".<sup>13</sup> Hence immortality and a long life in the body are the two inseparable terms of a divine existence in the world. This is the original formula of freedom bequeathed to us by the sages of the Veda.

## 2. The Vedantic View

Inheriting as they do the great tradition of Veda the sages of Vedānta uphold the ancient formula of freedom. They speak of reaching beyond death, *atimṛtyu*,<sup>14</sup> and attaining a full length of life, *sarvamāyuh*,<sup>15</sup> so that they may realise the undecaying immortality, *ajīryatām amrtānām*,<sup>16</sup> in the world.

The idea of living a long and healthy life occurs frequently in the *Upaniṣad*—"He reaches a full length of life and lives well, *sarvamāyur eti iyog jīvati*";<sup>17</sup> "May you live a hundred autumns of life, *śatam śarada āyuso jīvasva*";<sup>18</sup> "He reaches a full term of life, *sarvamāyur eti*".<sup>19</sup> The seers of the Vedānta, therefore, firmly believe that men are born not to live briefly and die in a middle period without enjoying a hundred years.

Though *atimṛtyu* is certainly a desirable goal of human life, it is not the highest to be achieved here. Its value lies only in helping us realise the highest spiritual ideal of our forefathers. It is repeatedly declared that man becomes immortal by becoming a knower of Brahman—"The knower of the immortal Brahman is immortal, *vidvān brahmā'mrto'mrtam*",<sup>20</sup> "They who know That become immortal, *ye tad vidur amrtās te bhavanti*";<sup>21</sup> "They who know That are immortal, *ya etad vidur amrtās te bhavanti*".<sup>22</sup> A knower of Brahman is not only immortal but also a possessor of the divine law of existence in the world. He attains absolute likeness to Brahman and becomes a maker of the universe, *viśvakṛt*.<sup>23</sup> No longer is he a slave of the world but a master who enjoys possessing the whole world as his own, *tasya lokah*.<sup>24</sup> If we think that a full life is all that we need to achieve and enjoy in the world, then we are indeed pitiable, *krpanah*.<sup>25</sup> For by missing the highest goal we miss a great treasure, *mahatī vinaṣṭuh*.<sup>26</sup>

### 3. Living a Full Life

There are at least two causes by which a seeker of Brahman may have to die before the appointed time: one is lack of proper care for the body and the other is lack of true insight into the body. As long as they are not removed he cannot enjoy the full term of physical life in the world

(a) If on account of his preoccupation with the spiritual aim the seeker of Brahman fails to pay proper attention to the body and take appropriate measures to preserve it carefully, he allows death to overtake him and bring his physical life to an abrupt end. He loses not only his body but also a good opportunity to realise and manifest Brahman. The remedy is therefore to pay full attention to the body and allow nothing to cut short its existence, to break its pilgrimage in the middle, *śarīrayātrā*. The *Upaniṣad* speaks of many methods of preserving the body for a hundred years. One of them relates to the control of the vital force in the body, *prāna*.

There is a parable in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* which brings out the importance of Prana in the body. In the body are seated the organs of speech, eye, ear, and mind. When one of them—speech or eye or ear or mind—is absent for a while, it does no harm to the body, for the body continues to function with the help of the other organs. But when Prana which informs the body is about to be withdrawn, the body begins to fall apart, for all organs of knowledge depend upon Prana for their existence and functioning. The aim of the parable is to teach that the principle which nourishes, preserves and controls the body is Prana.

It is true that Prana is a very important principle in the body, but it is also true that it must be strong enough to contain the attacks of other forces operating in the environment, otherwise the body may break and cannot complete its full term of life. The *Upaniṣad* speaks of several *upāsānās* by which Prana in the body can be strengthened. For instance, we may refer to the Prana Vidya. The words embodying this Vidya, when spoken to a dry stump, are capable of bringing it back to life and making it put out new branches and leaves, *jāyera-eva-asmin-śākhāḥ praroheyuh palāśāni*.<sup>27</sup> If a lifeless stump can come back to life by the power of this Vidya, certainly the same Vidya can transform the Prana in the seeker of Brahman into a principle of immense strength and help him live a hundred years fruitfully, *sarvameva ta āyur yanti ye prānam brahmopāsate*.<sup>28</sup> Death cannot approach him until its appointed time arrives; it has to stand helplessly at a great distance from him, *dūram ha vā asmānmṛtyur bhavati*.<sup>29</sup>

(b) Once the seeker of Brahman gets out of the necessity of birth and death and is firmly established in the immortal Brahman he may hasten to conclude that the Lord is in Brahman alone and does not exist in the living being behind the body, the being which expresses itself in life and works in the world. As a result, he is attached to the freedom of immortality in Brahman and seeks self-annulment in some formless transcendental existence. In proportion as the

attraction for self-annulment becomes irresistible he shrinks from life and works and tries to realise the goal by withdrawing the will-to-live from the body. As soon as the will-to-live is fully withdrawn, the body is deprived of its natural term of life and forced to fall and perish like a rootless tree.

It is the absence of a true insight into the body that accounts for the abrupt ending of physical life of the knower of Brahman. If he sees the presence of the Lord in the living being behind the body also, his vision becomes wide and complete. On account of this vision his attachment for the freedom of immortality ceases; with the cessation of this attachment he is freed from the attraction for self-annulment and the consequent desire for renouncing the body. He learns to look upon the body not as an object of renunciation but as a temple to be preserved for habitation by the Lord, *īśāvāsyam idam*.<sup>30</sup> He desires to live here enjoying the full measure of life and works without falling from the vision of the immortal Brahman, *kurvanneveha karmāni jīviṣet śatām samāh*.<sup>31</sup>

In fact this is how the sages of Vedānta look upon the body. They repeatedly affirm that the Lord is seated in the heart of all beings, *janānām hrdaye sannivistah*.<sup>32</sup> They also take care to point out that on account of the perception of the Lord in the body all shrinking from life and works disappears, *na tato vyugupsate*,<sup>33</sup> and the knower of Brahman becomes a doer of good deeds in the world, *brahmaṇid puṇyakṛt*.<sup>34</sup>

#### 4. Manifesting the Law of Immortality in Life

To become immortal is to be no more mortal. However, it does not mean that to be immortal is to live in a body which never perishes, for the *Upaniṣad* clearly says that the body of the immortal falls and perishes like the slough of a snake, *mrtā pratyastā*.<sup>35</sup> As we have already made it sufficiently clear, the *Upaniṣad* is concerned with physical death only to the extent of keeping it at a far-off distance and preserving the natural length of physical life. In short, a long-extended life and not a complete removal of physical death is the aim of the *Upaniṣad*. If the *Upaniṣad* does not propose to completely remove physical death, then in what sense does it say that a mortal becomes immortal?

Before we try to answer the above question, we shall note that the concept of mortality, as understood by the seers of the Vedānta, is not limited to physical mortality. For them death is not only a death of material form but a death of soul in a material form, even as birth is not only a birth of physical form but a birth of soul in a physical form. In other words, at birth there is a soul entering the body and living in it and at death this living soul departs from the body. Further, the soul's entry and departure are both imposed from without. As long as the soul is attached to the body, cannot distinguish itself from the body and lives as a finite entity (*alpam*) conditioned by the body, birth and death are imposed on it. It takes birth in order to work out the results of a previous death, and in working

out the results it attracts another death in order to be born again. It is a vicious cycle in which the soul moves back and forth as a helpless entity in obedience to the law of necessity imposed by the material form, *avaśam prakrtervaśāt*.<sup>36</sup> This necessity is referred to as *punarmrtyu* or *samsāra*.<sup>37</sup>

Not only does the soul take birth and pass out of the body under a compelling necessity but its living too is conditioned by this necessity. As the soul is working out the results of a previous death in its present birth, so its responses to the touches of the world are governed by the forces that have necessitated its present embodied life. As the soul is caught in the duality of death and birth, so also its living in the body is caught in the duality of right and wrong, of like and dislike, of pleasure and pain, of success and failure, *dvandvah*. Its dual response to the world is both a result and a cause of the duality of birth and death: a result, because all dual responses arise from the necessity of birth and death; a cause, because all these responses culminate in the same necessity. In other words, this necessity operates at all stages of the soul's career—in its birth, life and death.

Mortality, therefore, signifies not only the process of physical dissolution but also the necessity by which the soul is born in the body, the soul lives and acts in the body, and the soul passes out of the body.

Before coming to the question on immortality, we have to understand another important concept of Vedānta—the concept of Brahman, for it is repeatedly affirmed that by knowing Brahman a mortal becomes immortal.

Briefly speaking, the *Upaniṣad* sets forth three important aspects of Brahman. First of all, Brahman is never born and never dies, *ajah amaraḥ*.<sup>38</sup> This is the aspect of transcendence. Secondly, Brahman dwells within the heart of all as the Lord, not limited by their birth and death, *sarveśvarah*.<sup>39</sup> This is the aspect of immanence. Thirdly, Brahman is not limited by its transcendence or immanence, for it is free to be both at once, *tadantarasya sarvasya tadu sarvasyāsya bāhyataḥ*.<sup>40</sup> This is the aspect of omnipresence. As long as we do not take the aspect of omnipresence into account we fall away from the completeness of Brahman. But if we live in this aspect, we attain absolute likeness to Brahman, *paramam sāmyam upaiti*.<sup>41</sup> Of all the three, the aspect of omnipresence is the most blessed, *rūpaṁ kalyānatamaṁ*.<sup>42</sup>

Now we shall try to answer the question on immortality—in what sense has an immortal put an end to mortality? First of all, by living in the transcendent Brahman the soul is no more attached to the body and ceases to live as a finite entity conditioned by the body. It is no longer bound by the law of necessity of the material form. It realises that it was never born and will never die, for birth and death are the becomings of the body and not of the Self which is immortal, *amṛtam*. Secondly, by living in the immanent Brahman the soul looks upon the body as the dwelling-place of Brahman and performs all works in the world without shrinking from them *jugupsā*. Thirdly, by living in the omnipresent Brahman the soul is not only conscious of immortality but also enjoys the

freedom of immortality in the body. It does all works, unbound by the dualities which impose the necessity of birth and death. Its works neither proceed from nor lead to this necessity. On the contrary, its works issue out of the perception of the same Lord everywhere and culminate in the manifestation of His law of existence in the world. The *Upaniṣad* describes such a soul as the perfected one, *kṛtātmā*.<sup>41</sup>

An immortal is free of mortality not because he lives in an imperishable body, but because his soul is released from the necessity of birth and death, *samsāra*, and also from living and working in obedience to this necessity. Birth, life and works and death—all become circumstances of the divine soul living in the omnipresent Brahman and manifesting the law of immortality.

Now we clearly understand why we should not allow death to cut short our natural span of life either out of an attitude of indifference towards the body or out of a wrong notion that the body has no divine purpose to serve in the world. Living a full life in the body is as important as realising immortality, for it makes both possession and manifestation of immortality possible in the world.

### 5. The Fourfold Formula of Freedom and the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad*

The ancient formula of freedom is understandably both physical and spiritual: physical, because it is overcoming the limitation of short life and living a full life in the body; spiritual, because it is conquering the necessity of birth and death by realising the immortality of the soul and manifesting this immortality in active life. Physical freedom and spiritual freedom are inseparably connected with each other: while the physical makes the spiritual possible in the world, the spiritual completes and fulfils the physical in such a way that a full life in the body becomes a symbol of the immortal Lord seated behind the body. To seek exclusively the Spirit beyond the body or a full life in the body is to choose a lesser goal than the one offered to us by the ancient seers. As the *Upaniṣad* says, he who seeks such an exclusive goal goes to a blind darkness, *andham tamah*.

Though every *Upaniṣad* carefully preserves the ancient formula of freedom, nowhere else as in the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* is the formula so well and clearly stated. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why it has been accorded pride of place among the ten classical *Upaniṣads*.

First of all, the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* seeks to dispel the wrong notion that God cannot be found in the world but only in some transcendent state. Hence it deliberately begins with the expression “*īśāvāsyam idam sarvam*, All this is for habitation by the Lord.” If it is a fact that God lives in the world, then we should not shrink from the world. On the contrary, we should enjoy the world by giving up this attitude of shrinking, *tena tyaktena bhun̄jīthāh*. But it does not mean that the world is to be enjoyed as an object of egoistic desire, *mā grdhah*. For to do so is to see the ego and not God in the world and to return to the original position



that God does not live in the world. No one who has not given up shrinking and desire is eligible for the wealth of true enjoyment, *kasyasviddhanam*.

Secondly, stated in practical terms, the true enjoyment expresses itself in living a full life in the body and doing all works for the sake of the Lord, *kurvanneveha karmāṇi jīviṣet śatām samāḥ*. As long as the Lord is seated in the heart of every one of us, we have to live a long life and do works for His sake and cannot shrink from them, *evam tvayi nānyatheto'stu*. Since we live and do works not for the sake of the ego but for the sake of the Lord, they do not bind us, *na karma lpyate nare*.

Thirdly, if we do not recognise the presence of God in our body and therefore commit violence upon this dwelling *i.e.*, if we create conditions which do not allow the body to complete its natural term of life, we become self-slayers, *ātmahanojanāḥ*. And at the end of our physical existence we go to the worlds of darkness, the worlds of inferior existence or superior non-existence, *lokā andhena tamasāvṛtāḥ*.

Fourthly, having stated the ancient formula of freedom in terms of a prolonged life in the body and liberated works, the *Upanisad* proceeds to justify and at the same time expand the formula. Both the justification and the expansion of the formula are based on the complete vision of the Lord of whom Brahman and Nature are the two terms of manifestation in the world.\*

There are the inseparable aspects of the Lord. In Brahman He is eternal and unchanging; in Nature He undergoes change and becomes all existences. Brahman and Nature are also respectively known as the Non-Birth or the Dissolution and the Birth. Brahman is called the Non-Birth because Brahman is never born and never dies. It is also called the Dissolution because a complete knowledge of Brahman dissolves all limitations. Nature is referred to as the Birth because Nature gives birth to all existences. The *Upanisad* calls upon the liberated soul to rise to the supreme level of the Lord who embraces both Brahman and Nature, the Non-Birth and the Birth, and to possess on this basis both immortality and a prolonged life in the body as the inseparable aspects of a divine existence in the world.

By seeing Brahman and Nature as the inseparable aspects of the Lord we obtain two results: (1) we overcome death by Nature *i.e.*, we are able to preserve the body for the full term of life by mastering the forces of Nature that protect the body for a hundred years, *avidyayā mrtyum ūrtvā*; and (2) we enjoy immortality by Brahman *i.e.*, we become immortal and enjoy immortality in Brahman by identifying the soul with Brahman, *vidyayā amṛtam aśnute*.

\* He who knows That as both and inseparably together Brahman and Nature, crosses beyond death by Nature and enjoys immortality by Brahman (V 11)

He who knows That as both and inseparably together, the Birth and the Dissolution, crosses beyond death by the Dissolution and enjoys immortality by the Birth (V 14)

By seeing the Dissolution and the Birth as the inseparable aspects of the Lord we get two more results: (1) we overcome death by the Dissolution *i.e.* by dissolving the attraction for self-annulment and the consequent desire for withdrawing the will-to-live from the body we are able to retain the body and live a full life, *vināśena mrtyum tīrtvā*; and (2) we enjoy immortality by the Birth *i.e.*, we enjoy immortality by manifesting the law of immortality in terms of liberated life and works in the very body in which we are born, *sambhūtyā amrtam aśnute*.

(1) To overcome physical death and live a long-extended life by mastering the forces of Nature, (2) to enjoy immortality by becoming Brahman, (3) to go beyond physical death and live a full life by dissolving through the vision of Brahman in the body the desire to abridge the natural term of physical life, (4) to enjoy immortality by manifesting the divine law of existence in the mental, vital and physical functions of the body—this is the fourfold ancient formula of freedom as set forth by the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* of the Sukla-Yajur-Veda.

A seeker of Brahman encounters physical death before its appointed time at least twice in his life: once when he fails to pay attention to the need for protecting the body and next when he entertains a wrong notion that the body is an impediment to be dropped. He has to deal with both and conquer physical death, for by preserving the body for a hundred years and living a full life he should accomplish the double aim set before him—to possess immortality beyond the necessity of birth and death and then to manifest this divine principle in the body as the law of living and doing works in the world.

Though the *Upaniṣad* seems to have been composed as a corrective to the growing tendency of asceticism, it is an irony that the ancient formula of freedom enshrined in it came to be ignored and finally erased from the memory of the race when asceticism established itself as the predominant teaching of Vedānta \* The original harmony between immortality and physical life gave place to a narrow principle which took life in the body to be the opposite of immortality and insisted upon renouncing it as the royal means to possess the immortal freedom, *na karmaṇā...tyāgenaike amrtatvam ānaśuḥ* <sup>44</sup> However, there are unmistakable pointers in the *Upaniṣads* which help the discerning mind to go behind the veil and discover the original formula of freedom. For instance, a passage in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* accords a superior position to a person who both enjoys the Spirit and manifests the law of this Spirit in his active life, *ātmaraṭṭh kriyāvān*,<sup>45</sup> and speaks of him as the best among the knowers of Brahman, *brahmavidām varisthah*.<sup>46</sup>

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\* Shankara's interpretation of the second verse of the *Upaniṣad* is a good example of how the ancient formula was completely forgotten to the point of misunderstanding the text

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- 6 RV , 4-2-1
- 7 RV , 4-12-3.
8. RV , 4-9-4
- 8a RV , 3-1-14
- 9 RV , 5-15-1 (Tr Sri Aurobindo)
- 10 RV , 3-14-6 (SA)
- 11 RV , 3-16-6 (SA)
- 12 RV , 5-4-11 (SA)
- 13 RV , 7-59-12 This is a well-known passage but not so well understood by scholars. Usually this is rendered as "Just as a cucumber is removed from its stalk, so from Death's bonds may I be removed but not from Immortality." This is too literal and unimaginative and makes no sense. The poet's intention is to be saved from death, and the metaphor is used to bring out this intention very vividly. But the rendering puts a directly opposite sense into the metaphor. If the cucumber is removed from its stalk, it dies. In other words, it is not removed from death but removed by death. See Raimundo Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience* (1983) Pondicherry, All India Books, p. 538.
- 14 *Chândogya*, 2-10-1
- 15 *Ibid* , 2-11-2
- 16 *Katha*, 1-1-28
- 17 *Chândogya*, 2-13-2
- 18 *Kausîtaki*, 2-11
- 19 *Ibid* , 4-8
- 20 *Brhadâranyaka*, 4-4-17
- 21 *Ibid* , 4-4-14
- 22 *Śvetâsvatara*, 3-1
- 23 *Brhadâranyaka* 4-4-13
- 24 *Ibid* , 4-4-13
- 25 *Ibid* , 3-8-10
- 26 *Ibid* , 4-4-14
- 27 *Chândogya*, 5-2-3
- 28 *Taturîya*, 2-3-1
- 29 *Brhadâranyaka*, 1-3-9
- 30 *Îsa*, 1
- 31 *Ibid* , 2
- 32 *Śvetâsvatara*, 3-13, 3-20, 4-17 *Katha*, 2-1-12
- 33 *Katha*, 2-1-5
- 34 *Brhadâranyaka*, 4-4-9
- 35 *Ibid* , 4-4-7
- 36 *The Gîtâ*, 9-8
- 37 *Brhadâranyaka*, 3-2-10, *Katha*, 1-3-7
- 38 *Brhadâranyaka*, 4-4-25
- 39 *Mândûkya*, 6
- 40 *Îsa*, 5
- 41 *Mundaka*, 3-1-3
- 42 *Îsa*, 16
- 43 *Chândogya*, 8-13-1
- 44 *Kavalya*, 2
- 45, 46 *Mundaka*, 3-1-4

# VYASA'S TALE OF SAVITRI IN THE MAHABHARATA

२

## A VERSE-BY-VERSE RENDERING INTO ENGLISH

I: *King Aswapati's Receiving a Boon from Goddess Savitri, the Birth of a Daughter to him, and her Sojourn in Different Countries in Search of a Husband*

Yudhishtira said:

1. Neither for myself, nor for my brothers, do I grieve, O great Sage; not even for being deprived of the kingdom, as much do I for the daughter of Drupada
2. The evil-souled had put us to shame in the game of dice but she, the sister of Krishna, had come there to our rescue; and then again, in this forest, Jayadratha abducted her forcefully.
- 3 Did you ever in the past meet, or did you hear of any woman, devoted to her husband and highly virtuous, such a one and in such a manner as the daughter of Drupada?

Markandeya said:

4. Listen, O King Yudhishtira, the most precious fortune which the women of noble families desire and cherish, that is what princess Savitri won for them all.
5. Long ago in Madra reigned a saintly king, devout and a follower of the dharma; he lived in the holy company of the Brahmins and of the virtuous, and he was united with the truth, and had conquered the senses.
- 6 Performer of Yajnas, presiding over charities, skilful in work, loved by the city-dwellers and by all the people of his kingdom, one who was absorbed in the welfare of everybody, there ruled the Sovereign of the Earth, named Aswapati.
7. Of a forgiving nature, one whose speech was truth and who had subdued the senses, though he was so he had no issue, with the advancing of age this increased his affliction greatly
8. Therefore he resorted, with the concern of getting a child, to austere practices; only at fixed times he ate a little, and he observed continence, and restrained the senses fully.

9. Daily a hundred thousand oblations he, the most excellent among the kings, offered to Savitri; and it was only in the sixth part of the day that he took a little food.
10. Eighteen years passed this way, he being given to observances of such rules of penance, at the end of the eighteen-year period Savitri was much pleased with him
11. Then, O Yudhishtira, rising from the sacrificial flames in her splendid form she appeared in front of the King, exceedingly glad as she was; and she spoke, this way the words of benediction to the Sovereign of the Earth, Savitri to King Aswapati established in regular practices.

Savitri said:

12. O King sovereign, I am immensely pleased by your purity and chastity, by your abstinence and self-restraint, the observance of the rules of austerity, and all the mind with which you worshipped me in devotion.
13. O Aswapati, Ruler of Madra, ask what you desire, the boon; falter not in that, in performance of the duties of the dharma.

Aswapati said:

14. O Goddess, it was with the intention of begetting children that I initiated this holy sacrifice, grant several sons that the line of my ancestors may grow
15. If so pleased Thou art, O Goddess, grant this one boon that I entreat of Thee, the wise of the world, the twice-born, ever hold the proper begetting of progeny a great dharma.

Savitri said:

- 16: Fully aware of this intention of yours, O King, did I speak long before to the great Father, God the Creator himself, to grant a child to you
17. And as enjoined by Brahma, indeed by his gracious favour, soon you will have an effulgent daughter, O gentle-natured
18. Do not be uneasy or get troubled by it, nor should you argue against it; it is as bestowed by the Father-Creator that I tell it so, pleased that I am with you.

Markandeya said:

19. The King by saying 'very well' acknowledged gratefully what Savitri

promised him; he further implored her for the gracious favour to be fulfilled soon in the near future

20. Then, even as Savitri withdrew from sight, the valiant King returned to his capital and, attending to his duties always, ruled over the kingdom in the conduct of the dharma
21. The King, who was ever fixed in vows of righteousness, in the course of time established his seed in the womb of his eldest queen, the companion in the path of the dharma.
22. O Yudhishtira, she who conceived was a princess hailing from Malawa; in her the foetus grew, as does in the sky the Lord of the Stars in the bright half of the month.
23. At the proper time she gave birth to a lovely girl, lotus-eyed in look; happy about it, the noblest King performed all the rituals for the newly arrived.
24. Got as she was by the blessings of Savitri, who was pleased by the Savitri-oblations, the father and the wise ones named her too Savitri.
25. The Princess grew like the goddess Fortune herself, fair and beautiful; then, in course of time she entered into maidenhood.
26. With large hips and a slender waist graceful as she was, like a golden statue, people beholding her believed that some heavenly damsel had descended amidst them.
27. Her eyes were like full-blown lotuses and she seemed in her beauty to be flaming with splendour; indeed, warded off by that fiery brilliance, no one approached her asking for her hand.
28. Once, on a festive day, she fasted and then took a holy bath from over her head and thereafter went to worship the god; there with the chanting of the hymns of benediction by the wise ones, she offered ritual oblations to Agni.
29. Then taking the remains of flowers from the great-souled one, well-pleased she, who seemed to be goddess Lakshmi herself incarnate, went to her father
30. First offering flowers to her father she touched his feet in obeisance; then that beautiful maid stood, with her hands folded, close by the side of the King.

31. Seeing his daughter grown up and in full youth, and like a goddess effulgent, the King was very much distressed that none had yet come for her as a suitor.

The King said:

32. O Virgin, the time that you should be given in marriage has arrived, but no one has approached me so far, asking for your hand, hence you should yourself make the choice of a husband, one endowed with qualities befitting you.
33. Tell me then of him whom you would choose and, after giving due consideration to it, I shall make the marriage proposal; choose him whom you will acceptably desire.
34. What I have heard from the twice-born, well-versed in the sacred scriptures, of that I am speaking to you: you should also hearken to these words, O Virtuous.
35. One who does not give his daughter in marriage when of right age, such a father is to be reproached, a husband who does not have relation with his wife in the period favourable for conception becomes blameworthy; the son who does not take care of his widowed mother should also be looked down upon.
36. Listen to what I have said and make speed abroad in search of a husband; but refrain from such a deed as the gods should approve not, putting me to blame.

Markandeya said:

37. Having thus spoken to his daughter, he then commanded his elderly ministers to make necessary preparations and proceed on the journey along with her.
38. Blushing somewhat, the high-minded daughter bowed at her father's feet and, without a further thought, taking his words as an order, set out forthwith.
39. Riding her golden chariot and accompanied by the elderly counsellors, she travelled through several lovely woods of penance of the royal sages.
40. O Yudhishthira, there offering her respects to the venerable aged persons, by touching their feet, from forest to forest she went, journeying along.

41. Thus giving away great wealth in all the places of pilgrimage the Princess visited all distant lands and kingdoms inhabited by the most excellent wise persons.

II *Narad's Visit to Aswapati's Palace and Savitri's Firm Decision to Marry Satyavan.*

Markandeya said.

1. O Yudhishtira, on one particular occasion the King, the ruler of the Madra country, was in his Palace in the company of Narad; seated in the Hall, they were engaged in conversation.
2. About the same time Savitri, after visiting the holy places and all the ashramas, returned along with the ministers back to her father's house
3. Seeing there her father seated in the company of Narad she, the bright and graceful one, went around and bowed respectfully at the feet of both of them

Narad said:

4. On what mission, O King, did your daughter go and wherefrom is she returning? and why, now that she is a good young woman do you not find a suitable husband to be given her in marriage?

Aswapati said:

5. It was indeed with this intent, O god-sage, that I sent her in quest and it is after that she has just returned; let us hear from her of the one whom she must have chosen for husband.

Markandeya said:

6. On being asked by her father to narrate in detail everything of her journey she, the bright and beautiful one, obeying him, spoke this way.

Savitri said:

7. O Lord of the Earth, far in the Shalwa country once ruled the renowned Dyumatsena, heroic and righteous, but then he became blind.
8. Exploiting this opportunity, finding him with his sight gone though fixed in wisdom and his son still too young, a past enemy of his, a king of the neighbouring land, attacked him and seized his kingdom.
9. Then he, accompanied by his wife, and the child at a tender age, retired to a



forest, deep and large, and began to do austere tapasya by observing great and difficult vows

- 10 Though born in the city that child, whose name is Satyavan, was brought up in the forest hermitage; in him I saw a proper husband for me and I have chosen him so in my mind

Narad said.

11. Alas! Savitri by making this choice has, O King, unknowingly done something not desirable, that forebodes a great evil; she found Satyavan to be one of high merit
12. His father always speaks truth and his mother practises truth-speech; and for that reason was he named by the Brahmins Satyavan, the Truth-ful.
13. As a young lad he was very fond of horses and used to make clay-horses; he is good at painting horses and therefore is also known by the nickname Chitrashwa, the Painter of Horses.

The King said:

- 14 Prince Satyavan is affectionate towards his father, but is he bright and intelligent? is he of a forbearing nature and is he heroic in deed?

Narad said.

15. He is brilliant like the Sun, Vivasvan, and sharp in intelligence like Brihaspati; and, while a hero-warrior like Indra, he is forbearing in the manner of the Earth.
16. Is Prince Satyavan munificent and is he a respecter of the Brahmins? of excellent attributes, noble and generous, is he good-looking and handsome?

Narad said:

- 17 Like Sankriti, the son of Rantideva, he is munificent within the means at his disposal; and like Shibi, the son of Ushinar, he is a Brahmin devout and a speaker of truth.
- 18 Like Yayati he is nobly generous and is beautiful like the moon; this son of Dyumatsena, strong in build, is as handsome as if he were one of the Ashwinikumars
19. He has subdued his passions, is soft-natured, heroic in action, full of truth, and has regulated the senses; he is friendly with everybody, without envy, and is of a shy disposition and is radiant.

20. Those who have advanced in deep meditative practices and tapasya say briefly about him that he is straightforward and is steadfast on the path of duty and is well-established in fine qualities.

Aswapati said:

21. O venerable Sir, you have been proclaiming all that is noble and beautiful in him, but pray tell also if there are any blemishes too.

Narad said:

22. Yes, there is but one and it reduces to nought all the high qualities and virtues; and try howsoever one may, it is not possible to erase it.

23. Satyavan will in one year from today abandon his body, his life here expended; this is the only blemish and there is no other.

The King said:

24. Come hither, O Savitri, to make another choice, O fair and virtuous, proceed again; all the several great qualities avail nothing in that flawed measure.

25. Short is his life-span and as the revered Narad, respected by the gods also, says he shall at the end of the year give up his body

Savitri said:

26. Only once can occur the division of the property and only once a daughter given in marriage; having been made, a gift cannot be made a second time. All these three happen once and only once.

27. May he be of a short life or a long life, with virtuous qualities or without them, I have chosen him as my husband and I shall choose not again.

28. By perception does one first come to a certain conclusion and then one speaks of it; only afterwards is it put into action. That perception of mine for me is the one single authority here

Narad said:

29. O Great among men, firm and unperturbed is the discernment of Savitri and none can swerve her from that, and in every respect it is in conformity with the dharma.

30. The qualities Satyavan has, none else possesses; what looks to me proper is therefore to arrange for their marriage

The King said:

31. O venerable One, what you say is indeed true and what has to be is unavoidable; therefore I shall do what you advise, for you are my Teacher and my Preceptor.

Narad said:

32: The marriage of Savitri shall be without any ill-happening; I shall now take my leave; let always noble and propitious things be to all.

Markandeya said:

33. Uttering these benedictions, Narad got up and left for his abode in Paradise. And here the King began attending to the preparations of the marriage.

*(To be continued)*

R. Y. DESHPANDE

# UNFORGETTABLE

## 7. Sports

ON one Sunday morning just as Bimal woke up, Swaraj appeared and said, "Hurry up, Bimal, let's set forth as soon as possible. To cross ten miles along the uneven rural path will require a lot of time "

"Excuse me, Swaraj, I can't go, I have some important work to do." "Let alone your important work, the reputation of our school is also no less important. Don't you know that there is none else except you to take part in Putting the Shot." By then others also came and forced Bimal to accompany them to a distant village to join in inter-school Sports Competitions.

As expected Bimal came out first in Shot-Putting. Quite a number of other important prizes also came to the credit of the students of their school. But Bimal had nothing to do with them. However, they returned home happily with the prizes but not before nightfall.

Next day in the class, Dhirenbabu, the English teacher, dictated a Bengali passage, the English of which from the book was to be got by heart at home by the students. Now their duty was to write the English translation from memory without seeing the book. The process, according to Dhirenbabu, was excellent in order to learn good English easily. Bimal took down the Bengali dictation but was at a loss to translate it into English. So instead of wasting time he opened the book and started reading.

Dhirenbabu, a tall thin man of strict principles, slowly moved up and down between the benches to check if anybody was copying. Approaching Bimal he stood still in surprise and then snatched away the book from him without a word and kept it on his own table. After a while he spoke sternly, "Bimal, you dare to copy from the book in front of my very eyes, eh?"

"No sir, I was not copying, I was simply reading. Instead of wasting time for nothing I thought it better to read. Yesterday I had hardly any time to memorise." Dhirenbabu was dumbfounded, yet he did not bother to return the book until the end of the period. From then on an invisible wall was erected between the two. Dhirenbabu had not only stopped speaking with Bimal but also avoided looking at him even. Bimal also did not try to converse with him of his own accord. Rather he promised to break the wall of separation without exchange of words.

After the class examination, during holidays, while marketing, Bimal happened to meet Dhirenbabu face to face. All on a sudden with a broad smile the latter clasped the hesitating Bimal endearingly and whispered, "Bimal, my sport has yielded better result than your Shot-Putting." He patted his head and departed. Bimal tried all the while to make out the meaning of his ambiguous behaviour. He could not do that till he went to school after the holidays.

In the school the Headmaster told him, "Bimal, you have topped the list in English with record marks."

\*

### 8. Dacoity

A random cry for help at midnight broke Bimal's sleep. He got up to find his father ready with the gun to go out. He handed over to Bimal a strong stick and remarked, "Perhaps dacoits have invaded Shibu Pal's house. Come, let us go and see if we can be of any help."

Shibu Pal was a rich businessman. He owned a magnificent and worth-seeing two-storied wooden house. Recently his son, Dr. Hari Pal, prospered in medical practice. Hence his father retired from business and devoted most of his time to religious work, worship, meditation and service of saints and sadhus. Dr. Hari Pal was one of the most favourite persons of Bimal's father.

As Bimal and his father reached the crossroads towards Pal-para, (para means a part of a village) a hand grenade burst a little ahead of them. The smoke and the smell of powder almost choked them. Father said, "A dangerous situation, it will be unwise to proceed further. Bimal, let's return." Reaching home father nicely closed all the doors and windows and asking the women to be careful and quiet went up to the open terrace with Bimal.

Just then Samar-da, Bimal's cousin, cautioned father fearfully from the western-side building, "Kaka (uncle), the dacoits have already crossed the main arched gate and will enter our courtyard in no time. I can see from our roof their shadowy figures. Kaka, please fire forthwith, don't make any delay at all, fire..." Father could see nothing from the northern building because of the high two-storied building on the east. Still on being repeatedly asked by Samar-da he went on firing incessantly aiming at the supposed entrance of the courtyard.

After a while a gun-shot was heard from the mango-grove bordering Pal-para. Father stopped firing, receded a few steps and looking eastward found that the shadowy figures of the dacoits were retreating through the mango-grove. Immediately he fired aiming in that direction. Return firing sound could be heard. But both the sides were out of range.

Meanwhile Dr. Hari Pal rushed into the courtyard of Bimal's house lamenting. Falling on the ground he rolled from this side to that and complained, "Kaka, you have a gun, still you had not turned out for our rescue, oh... ho . ho . we are absolutely robbed of everything, oh .ho . ho ."

Father hurried downstairs, went to him and lifted him by the hands to his feet. He then said in a consoling tone, "What is this, Hari, eh? Why are you so much puzzled and disheartened? Come, let's go and see what has happened."

We all went and witnessed that the artistically-fashioned big wooden door of

their house had been split asunder with an axe. Pieces of wood and sticks of burnt torches were lying around. The bright and beautiful wife of Dr. Pal appeared with a pretty baby in her arms. A faint smile played on her shapely lips. Dr. Pal exclaimed, "How is it that you smile at such an odd time?" "You are upset for nothing," she said. "For nothing, eh? Where are your ornaments? I have personally seen you removing them from your body and handing them one by one over to the dacoits." "Yes, but those were of bronze, the real gold ornaments I hid just as I heard them breaking the door."

Satisfied, Dr. Pal wanted to know about his father, "Where is father, what about the iron safe?" "I don't know, have climbed down from upstairs just now." With Dr. Pal they all stepped into Shibu Pal's room. He was sitting quietly in front of the iron safe and drops of tears rolled down from his closed eyes. Dr. Pal asked, "Papa, has everything been taken away?" He opened his eyes and looking at him affectionately replied, "No, my son, nothing could be taken. Perhaps they were short of time." "Short of time?" "Yes, they demanded the key of the iron safe which I refused to give. Thereupon they forcefully tied my hands and feet with my own gamcha and raising a sharp chopper behind my neck threatened, 'Give the key at once, otherwise, your head will drop down on your lap.' I was silent and dauntless with the thought that death does not come more than once in one life. Just then at the sound of a shrill whistle they rushed out of the room." Dr. Pal's joy knew no bounds. He freed his father with quick hands.

Bimal asked his cousin amusedly, "Samar-da, did you really see the dacoits entering our main arched gate?" He retorted, "It matters little if I saw or not, the actual effect of my warning has been a success. The dacoits took to their heels out of fear on hearing Kaka's incessant gun-shots." Father observed, "The actual relation between the cause and the effect has yet to be established."

A few days later Father's gun was confiscated by the then Government.

\*

## 9. Catching a Thief

Bimal's sleep broke at midnight by the call of his comrades, "Bimal, lazy-bones, still sleeping? Don't you hear the hue and cry issuing from the mussulmanpara? Please get ready and let's set out without any delay."

Equipped with sticks and rods they moved along by boat following the noise. By boat, because during the rainy season the boat was the only means of communication there. Before long they reached a house which belonged to none else than Bimal's close friend and classmate, Rafik. They saw that by then a lot of people had already accumulated in the courtyard and at the centre a strong and stalwart man was sitting whose hands and feet were tied up with ropes. Whoever came started beating him at random.

Bimal looked for Rafik and found him approaching with tearful eyes. Whereas his father, Romjan (both a jute-grower and a jute-merchant) was quietly sitting like a statue on the threshold, very grave and serious. The ground around him was soaked with fresh blood. Bimal grasped Rafik's hands intimately and observed, "Please don't weep, Rafik and tell us why they are beating the man so recklessly." "Beating, because he is one of the thieves who robbed us of our whole year's income and seriously wounded my mother and uncle."

"Is it so? How many of you have caught that robust thief?" "Why, my father alone has caught him." "Alone! what do you mean? Your father is quite old, whereas that man seems to be powerful like a giant."

"Yes, but it happened thus: The thieves had dug a big hole in the basement of our house through which a thief slid inside and opened the door for the others to enter. Then they gradually removed the bundles of jutes heaped up in the front room and loaded their boat with them. My father who was sleeping in that room woke up with an uncanny feeling. He got out of the mosquito curtain and lo, a thief was in front with the load of jute on his head. He was dumbfounded and just as he moved to escape my father's hands caught him below his armpits from behind and shouted for help. While both of them fell down, the thief with his back on my father's chest. Struggle started and with tremendous effort the thief was able to project his legs through the nearby hole. The thieves outside tried to pull him out by the legs but in vain, because my father had gripped him strongly taking support with his feet on the frame of the fence. In the meantime responding to the call for help people came from all directions and the thieves had to flee. But before going they wounded my mother and uncle seriously in retaliation."

Bimal said, "Rafik, it's really a pathetic affair, but why are they beating the thief so recklessly? He can very well be taken to the Police Station." "Yes, of course, that's what is going to be done." Finding no reason for them to stay there any more, Bimal and his friends returned home with heavy hearts.

Many days passed by, but Bimal had not any chance to meet Rafik again as he had stopped going to school. Nor was he found anywhere else. Perhaps he was ill, thought Bimal and decided to go to his house to see him. But it took a few days more for him to do that. Meanwhile one day Rafik himself appeared. But what a Rafik! He had almost turned to a skeleton. Bimal received him with warm intimacy, "When have you got cured of your illness, Rafik?" he asked. "Illness! no, I was not ill at all." "Then why do you look so thin and unhealthy? Moreover, you don't even go to school."

"No, Bimal, I won't go to school any more. Now I have to look after my father's work." Bimal was taken aback, had his father died then? Bimal asked in a feeble, hesitating voice, "Why, your father?" "He is in jail now." "Jail! should one be imprisoned for catching a thief? I heard that one is rewarded for such good work." "Perhaps, but the thief had died on the way while being taken to

the Police Station.” “But your father had nothing to do with that, he was sitting quietly and presumably had not raised his hand even once.”

“Yes, but the law did not listen to that. The judge, for reasons best known to him, sided with the thieves and gave a verdict of three years’ rigorous imprisonment to my honest, simple and innocent father.”

*(To be continued)*

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY



## NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

### Some Notes on Michael Murphy's Study *The Future of the Body*

MICHAEL Murphy is well-known among New Ages in the U.S. as co-founder of the famous Esalen Institute in California. Many prominent lecturers from all over the world—also from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram—have been guests there, a large number of psycho-physical therapies and alternative methods were first tried and tested at this Institute. Murphy's monumental new book *The Future of the Body—Explorations Into the Further Evolution of Human Nature*<sup>1</sup> was immediately given enthusiastic reviews. C.T. Tart, Professor of Psychology at the University of California, wrote. "The only way to adequately describe this book is to state that it is the most important work on the relationship between mind and body ever written."

I was also enthusiastic at the beginning. What a wealth of material is presented, how many interesting and new sources are revealed in this enormous research work! Murphy, who spent more than a year in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, according to the biographical note, has also a large number of references to the Indian yogi. In fact, the Index reveals that Sri Aurobindo is one of the most frequently mentioned authors in the book. Several of his texts are quoted in it, but unfortunately not correctly. I discovered certain changes after I had developed doubts about a few passages from *The Life Divine*. It is rather strange: only the chapters are given in the footnotes, no page numbers. So I searched for the texts and found that in several cases Murphy had made modifications. Perhaps subjectively his motive may be noble: he wants to present an improved Aurobindo to his readers, with presumably polished style and presentation. Nevertheless, no serious researcher can allow himself such procedure, which in fact throws a shadow on this otherwise brilliantly conceived book, prepared over a very long period of time.

I will document his alterations in two cases. On pp. 124-5 he cites Sri Aurobindo in a long quotation with three paragraphs. All of the sentences have been assembled by him from pp. 104-5 of *The Life Divine*<sup>2</sup>. In the second paragraph Sri Aurobindo is quoted as saying,

[However] there is something in us which takes delight impartially in all external being and enables us to persevere through all labors, suffering and ordeals

<sup>1</sup> Published by Jeremy P. Tarcher, New York 1992. Pp. 785 \$ 30.

<sup>2</sup> My references are to the one-volume edition of the Ashram, Pondicherry 1970.

Sri Aurobindo's original text is much longer, I print in italics the words which Murphy omitted:

*“Behind there must be something in us,—much vaster, profounder, truer than the superficial consciousness,—which takes delight impartially in all experiences; it is that delight which secretly supports the superficial mental being and enables it to persevere through all labours, sufferings and ordeals in the agitated movement of the Becoming.”* (*The Life Divine*, p 104; Murphy p 124)

If you compare the two texts, you can see how “there must be something in us” becomes “there is something in us” or “in all experiences” becomes “in all external being”, quite apart from the fact that Murphy does not use dots (...) to indicate he has omitted words in his quote (elsewhere he does use dots). This way of free text-mixing is rather shocking, although here the modified text may not dramatically differ from the original. But once we grant ourselves this kind of freedom, we open the gate to more serious blunders, as in the following passage from *The Life Divine*, where again I have printed words that were omitted by Murphy in italics:

In the mind, it translates into a calm *of* intense delight of *spiritual* perception and vision and knowledge, in the heart into a *wide or deep* or passionate delight of *universal* union *and*<sup>1</sup> love and sympathy *and the joy of beings and the joy of things*. In the will and vital parts it is felt as *the energy of delight of a divine life-power* in action or a beatitude of the senses perceiving and meeting the One everywhere ( ) (*The Life Divine*, p. 991; Murphy, p 47)

So we read the first sentence of the edited text:

In the mind, it translates into a calm intense delight of perception and vision and knowledge, in the heart into a passionate delight of union, love and sympathy

This time Murphy gives the source directly in brackets: “Sri Aurobindo 1970, *The Life Divine*, pt. 2, Chap. 27 Vol. 19 in *The Collected Works*”. But in fact it is *not* Sri Aurobindo. Quite obviously, the whole statement assumes a different shade of meaning, after words such as “spiritual” and “universal” have been eliminated. Simply cutting out parts of a sentence in this way without notifying the reader about your editing, is absolutely uncommon and inadmissible. Nearly

<sup>1</sup> Murphy has replaced the “and” by a comma

all quotations from *The Life Divine* which I examined, had undergone some minor or major modification.<sup>1</sup>

If we neglect this rather disturbing deficiency, Murphy's book offers a lot of important, updated and informative material. The title and subtitle should not be taken too literally: we are given a vast overview over research in consciousness phenomena, as well as the whole potential of physical life and extraordinary experiences, also of yogis, saints, athletes and professional sportsmen. There are sections on topics such as spiritual healing, somatic disciplines, biofeedback, martial arts and transformative practices<sup>2</sup>

The author mentions Sri Aurobindo repeatedly as an evolutionary thinker. In one passage, for instance, he names him in line with Fichte, Hegel, Bergson, Whitehead, Samuel Alexander, Jean Gebser and others, "all of whom have tried to comprehend or explain the developing universe in relation to something ultimate, eternal, or everlasting." Murphy feels skeptical regarding the idea that "Supermind, the dynamic aspect of the Absolute, will transform earthly life by a 'universal descent' What Sri Aurobindo meant exactly by this epochal event has puzzled many who are otherwise sympathetic to his vision. Nevertheless, Sri Aurobindo's synoptic metaphysics, his psychology of superordinary states, his doctrine of bodily transformation, and many practical aspects of his yoga point the way to integral practices for our time " However, the Mother's manifold experiences which appear very relevant for this kind of study have not been discussed. One reason might be that Murphy's main focus is on physically verifiable *siddhis* etc. He assumes (as we know from interviews) that in future evolution several of them may become naturalized in humans so that what is today considered paranormal becomes the norm. Even now some extraordinary possibilities described in the book can be realized by "all of us", he suggests in the preface

There is no doubt that Murphy's book—in spite of several reservations—is an important publication. The 84 pages Bibliography alone will be a most welcome aid to any researcher in this field. Several Appendices offer additional information. Physical education teachers and doctors will value his enormous expertise on mind-body experiences and appreciate the many data he gives. I will conclude this review with a quotation from the Chapter on "Adventure and Sport":

The fact that spiritual moods occur spontaneously in many athletes indicates that disciplines for the body sometimes catalyze depths of the mind, even in people who have little or no understanding of such experience. The

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, p 190 = *The Life Divine* p 3-4, or p 585 = p 425 (no chapter no is given in the footnote!) The quotation on p 182 is found in Book II (not I, as the footnote says), Chapter 18 = p 714

<sup>2</sup> Murphy defines transformative practices as "a complex and coherent set of activities that produces positive changes in a person or group "

mind frequently opens in sport, suffusing bone and muscle with its latent energies, whether or not the athlete can describe what is happening to him. Indeed, I have come to believe that sport sometimes becomes a Western yoga of sorts, an earthy form of transformative practice. Through a contagion we are hardly aware of, athletes in top form awaken a secret sense that we harbor capacities for extraordinary life

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

*Sri Aurobindo's Prose Style* by Goutam Ghosal. Pub. Sri Mira Trust, Pondicherry. Distributed by SABDA, Pondicherry-605 002 Pages. 154. Price: Rs 70.

It is said a poet is one who has achieved mastery over prose. And Sri Aurobindo is a poet, or rather a poet's poet for he has inspired a school of poets who take pride in calling themselves "Aurobindonian Moderns". Any reader of Sri Aurobindo's prose writings would feel that he is reading the prose not of a philosopher or yogi but of a literary artist with a mind of exceptional calibre. Hence the author of the book under review, Dr Goutam Ghosal of Santiniketan, Calcutta, does not in the least exaggerate when he writes: "The prose of Sri Aurobindo is often poetry in disguise and it is often this bare poetry that is used in the name of prose."

A look at the Aurobindoniana accessible in any library worth the name will reveal that there are a good number of studies available on Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, yoga, political thought, aesthetics, poetry, plays and literary criticism. But one doubts whether a study of the stylistic features of his prose is available. Dr. Goutam Ghosal's book fills the gap for his is the first detailed study of Sri Aurobindo's prose style.

Among the beauties of this slim and earnest volume are the clarity and brevity with which it puts its arguments. Its author with an avowedly humble attitude and a homely style sets out to highlight to us Sri Aurobindo's achievement as a prose stylist. He makes some fine new points about the master craftsman's philosophical writings, and gives fresh illumination to his literary writings, especially the short stories.

Sri Aurobindo, writes Dr Goutam Ghosal, "had an uncanny ability of changing his style with the change of topics. There is an impression of the superhuman memory, which prevented him from using the same syntax twice." This idea is the gist of the entire thesis. In the twelve chapters of this scholarly work, the author examines the Uttara Yogi's style in development, his formative influences, his forms and rhetoric, his narrative style, his great achievements and his influence on the present-day writers.

For a development survey of Sri Aurobindo's prose styles ("as always with Sri Aurobindo, the style changes with the change of themes"), the author improves upon the commonly accepted phase division of the yogi's writings thus:

1. Early prose (England);
- 2 Middle prose (Baroda to the publication of *Bande Mataram*);
- 3 Turning point (1908),
- 4 Later prose (Pondicherry, 1910-26); and
5. Last Prose (Pondicherry, 1926-50)

Such a division helps the author to trace the influence of the Bible, Oscar Wilde and George Meredith among many others on his aphoristic style, to discuss in detail the dialogue styles in his short stories and to throw light on his

“touch-and-go style” and “exhaustive method”. This phase division also helps Dr Ghosal to concentrate on the major works written during the Pondicherry Period (*Arya Period*) and come out with a spell-binding discovery “Fusion of Myths and Seven Kinds of Style”. Every variety—1. English on the surface, but Sanskrit at bottom; 2. Inspired style caught in the periodic structure; 3. Synthetic style based on a synthesis of science, psychology and literature; 4. Great rush of eloquence born of spiritual inspiration; 5. Style of an historical novelist, with a deep visional inlook into history; 6. The prose of a seer-poet, and 7. A sense of thrill and adventure—is illustrated with relevant quotes from the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library (SABCL) and nothing is left to the readers’ imagination.

Further, Goutam Ghosal studies the different elements of Sri Aurobindo’s style and examines the expressive role of his words and his figures of words and sentences only to show that the yogi “goes very deep inside himself and touches the sources of poetry while writing certain prose pieces.” Finally, in order to leave no stone unturned, the author by citing samples from the writings of “Aurobindonian Moderns” (a phrase coined by K.D. Sethna) like Nolini Kanta Gupta, K.D. Sethna, M.P. Pandit, K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, V.K. Gokak among many others to reveal to us how the Aurobindonian style has been infused into the prose of his disciples.

As this book is “both anthology and prose criticism” and attempts to study one of the unexamined aspects of Sri Aurobindo’s prose writings, it is not only a welcome addition to Indo-Anglian criticism but also a highly commendable volume to Aurobindomana.

P. RAJA

## *Students' Section*

### THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Seventy-second Seminar

26 April 1992

#### WHAT IS THE RELEVANCE OF SRI AUROBINDO'S INTEGRAL YOGA AT PRESENT WHEN HUMANITY IS UNDERGOING AN EVOLUTIONARY CRISIS?

Speech by Kamal Shah

THE world as we see it today is nothing but a chaotic product of the modern vitalistic and materialistic man. To satisfy his ego and his desires, he has created this vast structure of the external life. Now this structure has grown so complex and cumbersome that man, its own creator, finds it difficult to manage, let alone to rectify and change it. Thus have arisen, as Sri Aurobindo says, "a complex political, social, administrative, economic, cultural machinery, an organised collective means for his intellectual, sensational, aesthetic, and material satisfaction."<sup>1</sup>

As a result in the modern world "there is a chaos of clashing mental ideas, urges of individual and collective physical want and need, vital claims and desires, impulses of an ignorant life-push, hungers and calls for life satisfaction of individuals, classes, nations, a rich fungus of political and social and economic nostrums and notions."<sup>2</sup>

This then is the evolutionary crisis which man faces today—an unbalanced lop-sided development of human life in the modern civilisation.

Man has gained tremendous power over physical nature, but on the other hand he has regressed and lost almost all control over his internal psychological nature. It is this disequilibrium that has manifested in all spheres of life.

Reason and science are good so far as an external mechanised and artificial arrangement of life are concerned; but an equal or greater development of the deeper and higher ranges of man's consciousness is the critical need of the hour to set right the acute imbalance and assure a harmonious progress.

Morality and religion too cannot furnish us with satisfactory solutions of this crisis. They can at best make superficial and ineffective changes in man's life.

Past spiritual systems can only offer a solution which rejects and escapes from life to run away from this illusory world, to sever all ties with it and to

<sup>1</sup> *The Life Divine* (Cent Ed., Vol. 19), p. 1053

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1054

merge into a world-annihilating supracosmic transcendence.

It is here that the relevance of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga comes in. In his Yoga life is not rejected; on the contrary, it is in life itself that the Divine has to be realised.

Further, Sri Aurobindo does not accept the yogic realisations of the past as the ultimate limit of spiritual development. He goes beyond them and brings into focus the Supermind, a level where infallible Knowledge and Power reign, which is automatically and sovereignly all-fulfilling. It is this Supermind alone which can bring a lasting solution to the present crisis by transforming the present human life into the Life Divine. To realise the Supermind, according to Sri Aurobindo, is man's true evolutionary destiny.

Being convinced of this in his inner realisation, Sri Aurobindo worked all his life to bring down the Supermind into the world. Finally, the Supermind did manifest in February 1956 in a global form in the earth's subtle-physical layer and has stood there preparing for its overt manifestation in the external life of the earth.

This Supramental Truth-Power, a Power of supreme potency, now stands behind an ever-thinning veil. When it shall break out by the irresistible action of the Supramental Force and Ananda, the whole earth shall be inundated by its pent-up golden flood. That will be the Hour of God, the New Age for man and earth, the total rule of the Divine over his Creation.

The Supramental Truth is pressing hard for manifestation but the general humanity is still unprepared to receive it. If there are at least a handful of individuals, a few torch-bearers who can transform themselves fully and achieve Supramental Transformation, they can save the present human race. Otherwise there is likely to be a great destruction before the New Creation can take place. Thus the future of our race lies on the shoulders of a few select individuals. The Supramental Manifestation will surely come but are there these few individuals ready to receive it and save the world? This is the question which all who call themselves Sri Aurobindo's disciples have to answer at this crucial moment in world-history.

This is the relevance of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga to the evolutionary crisis that the human race faces today.