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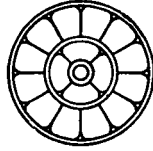
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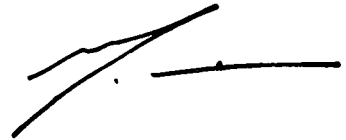
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled



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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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MADHAV PANDIT PASSES AWAY

WHEN I went for a last look at the body of my friend Madhav Pandit, who had passed away on March 14 at the age of 75, I could not help putting my hand upon his forehead at the moment I arrived by his side and again at the moment I left it. At this touch of affection, happy memories surged up.

What I most remembered in general about Madhav was his combination of spiritual self-discipline, wide mental scope, spontaneous non-ritualistic devotion to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, varied learning and yet humble desire to be taught, warm cheerful temperament and laughing superiority to adverse circumstance.

He who had made a detailed study of the ancient scriptures was still quite ready to admit a mistake and seek correction from an unscholarly dabbler in scriptural lore. While hundreds regarded him as the last word on subtle problems he would time and again want a confirmation or correction from one who was a tyro in comparison. Then there was his sympathy and quick response and happy trust. I vividly remember an incident many years ago. I was living on my own means at the time. Finding myself in financial straits I sought a loan from him. He readily agreed to a series of advances month after month from a book-printing organisation he had formed. I wrote out a grateful receipt of the first instalment and gave it to him. Instantly he tore it to bits and threw it into the waste-paper basket. I caught hold of his hands affectionately and have never forgotten this gesture of absolute faith on his part.

His helpfulness to fellow-sadhaks, even to those whom others regarded as small fry, could always be counted on. He would do all he could to make their way smoother. There was also his friendly turn towards souls in difficulty or uncertainty. Pitted against powerful presences, they would depend on him to slip to them some private information which would enable them to come up fighting when a cause seemed forlorn.

Certain ways of his which smacked of “guruship” were balanced by the utterly unassuming attitude he had towards his so-called “disciples” upon non-formal occasions. He considered those ways to be in consonance with the traditional Indian mind which practised feet-touching and blessing-receiving wherever a higher consciousness was felt to be present. I was sure that inwardly he passed on to his Gurus whatever act of reverence was done towards him and there was the plausible argument that if the act was not sought for but allowed because it was a psychological aid to the doer, there could be no harm. On hearing this argument I wrote an article which, among other things, tried to show that in the long run the act could harm both the doer and the receiver. Naturally I sent the typescript to Madhav, asking him whether it could be published in *Mother India*. His prompt reply was: “Why not?” So the piece went to press, but when it was in the galley state I found that a party wanted to make use of it as the main tool of a campaign of denigration of Madhav. At once I withdrew it lest it should serve in malicious hands to make one debatable aspect loom

unduly large of a person who had many admirable sides to his character and who in his private personal relationships never put on airs.

I may also glance at Madhav's extreme orderliness of method and efficiency of execution. The Mother had full confidence in his assessment of a situation and in his management of it. If accounts kept by him and by other agents differed, she would give preference to his. Along with meticulous method went his phenomenal memory for small items like people's addresses. Everything was in its proper place both in his mind and in his daily life. But I never found anything rigid in his manner. He was always ready to change according to the need of the moment.

Now a word about his literary activity. He was an accomplished impressive speaker, very much in demand. Nobody in the Ashram has written so many books of lucid direct exposition of the Master's and the Mother's teachings. Nor has anybody done as many extensions of these teachings to touch problems theoretical or practical of sadhana. Not that one could always agree with all his pronouncements, but there was seldom any pronouncement which did not open up some vista which would lead one to make some discovery of one's own.

Here was an enterprising adventurous mind looking in diverse directions—and behind it one felt a questing soul ever remembering the glory it had seen and loved and obeyed: Sri Aurobindo's vast-visioned wisdom and the Mother's deeply insightful care and creativity.

K.D. SETHNA

TALKS BY THE MOTHER

EXTRACTS FROM THOSE OF 17 AND 19 MARCH 1951

. AFTER all, the ancient initiatory systems were good in a way, in the sense that they revealed the Knowledge only to those who had reached a stage where they could receive it directly without the help of words. And I'm afraid it may come to the same thing now—perhaps even one who has this supramental knowledge will never be able to make himself understood by people, unless they themselves become capable of entering into this knowledge. And so the logical result is that people will say, as I have heard it said: "Oh! it is just as in ordinary life." Precisely because all that is not of the ordinary life completely escapes our perception, it cannot be transmitted by words.

Take a place like this, which is surcharged with certain forces, certain vibrations, these vibrations do not show themselves in visible and tangible things—they can produce changes, but as these changes occur according to a method (as all physical things do), you pass almost logically from one state to another and this logic prevents you from perceiving that there is something here which does not belong to normal life. Well, those who have no other perception than that of the ordinary mind, who see things working out as they habitually do or seem to do in ordinary life, will tell you, "Oh that, that is quite natural." If they have no other perception than the purely physical perception, if they are not capable of feeling the quality of a vibration (some feel it vaguely, but those who are not even capable of feeling that, who have nothing in them corresponding to that or, if they have something, it is not awakened), they will look at the life here and tell you, "It is like the physical life—you have perhaps some ideas of your own, but there are many who have their own ideas; perhaps you do things in a special way, but there are lots of people who also do things in a special way. After all, it is a life like the one I live." ...And so, it may very well happen that at a given moment the supramental Force manifests, that it is conscious here, that it acts on Matter, but those who do not consciously participate in its vibration are incapable of perceiving it. People say, "When the supramental force manifests, we shall know it quite well. It will be seen"—not necessarily. They will not feel it any more than those people of little sensitivity who may pass through this place, even live here, without feeling that the atmosphere is different from elsewhere—who among you feels it in such a precise way as to be able to affirm it?... You may feel in your heart, in your thought that it is not the same, but it is rather vague, isn't it? But to have this precise perception.. listen, as I had when I came from Japan: I was on the boat, at sea, not expecting anything (I was of course busy with the inner life, but I was living physically on the boat), when all of a sudden, abruptly, about two nautical miles from Pondicherry, the quality, I may even say the physical quality of the atmosphere, of the air, changed so much that

I knew we were entering the aura of Sri Aurobindo. It was a *physical* experience and I guarantee that whoever has a sufficiently awakened consciousness can feel the same thing.

I had the contrary experience also, the first time that I went out in a car after many many years here. When I reached a little beyond the lake, I felt all of a sudden that the atmosphere was changing; where there had been plenitude, energy, light and force, all that diminished, diminished. . . and then nothing. I was not in a mental or vital consciousness, I was in an absolutely physical consciousness. Well, those who are sensitive in their physical consciousness ought to feel that quite concretely. And I can assure you that the area we call "the Ashram" has a condensation of force which is not at all the same as that of the town, and still less that of the countryside.

So, I ask you: this kind of condensation of force (which gives you quite a special vibration of consciousness), who is there that is really conscious of it? . . . Many among you feel it vaguely, I know, even people from outside feel it vaguely; they get an impression, they speak of it, but the precise consciousness, the scientific consciousness which could give you the exact measure of it, who has that? I'm not alluding to anyone in particular, each one can look into himself. And this, this condensation here is only a far-off reflection of the supramental force. So when this supramental force will be installed here definitively, how long will it take for people to perceive that it is there? . . . And that it changes everything, do you understand? And when I say that the mind cannot judge, it is on facts like these that I base myself—the mind is not an instrument of knowledge, it cannot know. A scientist can tell you the proportion of the different components in any particular atmosphere, he analyses it. But as for this proportion here, who can give it? Who can say: There is such a vibration, such a proportion of this, such a proportion of that, such a proportion of the supramental?.. I put the question to you so that you may ponder over it.

*

What characterises the substance of the psychic world?

The substance of the psychic world is a substance proper to it, with its own psychic characteristics: a sense of immortality, a complete receptivity to the divine influence, an entire submission to this influence by which it is wholly impregnated. It is this exactly which distinguishes the psychic from the other parts of the being. When, for instance, I speak of organising the mind and the vital around the psychic centre, I do not mean that they become psychic; they remain the mind and the vital, but they are organised around the psychic as an army is organised around its leader—it does not become the leader, it obeys him, doesn't it? Well, it is the same thing here; the vital and the mind are organised

around the psychic, they receive orders from the psychic and carry them out as well as they can. But their substance does not become psychic substance as a consequence. They can be under the influence of the psychic and assume its nature more or less but not its substance.

You said that our body can become receptive to forces which are concentrated in certain places or in certain countries. But can we have this physical sensation without a preliminary preparation of the consciousness? Or is it truly a spontaneous sensation like heat, cold or goose-flesh, for example?

If it were the result of a thought or a will, it would not be an experience and it would have no value. You understand, I affirm absolutely that any experience that is the result of a thought or preconceived will has no value from the spiritual point of view.

But were you not in a state, so to say, "favourable" to this sensation?

There are people who live constantly in a higher consciousness, while others have to make an effort to enter there. But here it is an altogether different thing, in the experience I was speaking about, what gave it all its value was that I was not expecting it at all, not at all. I knew very well, I had been for a very long time and continuously in "spiritual" contact, if I may say so, with the atmosphere of Sri Aurobindo, but I had never thought of the possibility of a modification in the physical air and I was not expecting it in the least, and it was this that gave the whole value to the experience, which came like that, quite suddenly, just as when one enters a place with another temperature or another altitude.... I do not know if you have noticed that the air you breathe is not always the same, that there are different vibrations in the air of one country and in the air of another, in the air of one place and in the air of another. If indeed you are accustomed to have this perception of the subtle physical, you can say immediately, "Ah! this air is as in France" or "This is the air of Japan." It is something indefinable like taste or smell. But in this instance it is not that, it is a perception of another sense. It is a physical sense, it is not a vital or mental sense; it is a sense of the physical world, but there are other senses than the five that we usually have at our disposal—there are many others.

In fact, for the physical being—note that I say the physical being—to be fully developed, it must have twelve senses. It is one of these senses which gives you the kind of perception I was speaking of. You cannot say that it is taste, smell, hearing, etc., but it is something which gives you a very precise impression of the difference of quality. And it is very precise, as distinct as seeing black and white, it is truly a sense perception.

Generally, when you want to study occultism, the first thing that the Master

does is never to speak to you about it, never to explain it to you, precisely because of this ridiculous phenomenon of the mind which begins to “think” about it and brings you “experiences” which have no value: they are mental formations which make a plaything of you, that is all. They have no reality.

You must distrust the mind altogether when you want to enter the world of experiences. It is enough for the mind to be just slightly roused for it to say, “Ah, what is going on?” . Then it may be that things do happen but it is no longer *the* thing, it is a fabrication.

First condition, know how to keep silent. And not only keep your tongue quiet, but silence your mind, keep the head silent. If you wish to have a true, sincere experience upon which you can build, you must know how to be silent, otherwise you have nothing but what you fabricate yourself, which is equivalent to zero. All that one can say is, “Heavens, what a fashioner my mind is!”

(Collected Works of the Mother, Centenary Edition, Vol 4, pp 222-24 and 228-31)

SRI AUROBINDO'S VISION OF THE FUTURE SOCIETY

In the context of the collapse of Marxism in the Soviet Union and East European countries and the need to search for deeper roots of society than mere Capitalism or any mixed economy, Sri Aurobindo's vision of a spiritualised society is indeed relevant.

Gopal Bhattacharjee, International Secretary of the Sri Aurobindo Society, who has carried Sri Aurobindo's message to 120 countries, presents his Master's vision by culling passages from the Master's own writings for the sake of faithfulness in presentation and effectiveness in expression

The Spiritualised Society's Sociology

A SPIRITUALISED SOCIETY would treat in its sociology the individuals from the saint to the criminal, not as units of a social problem to be passed through some skilfully devised machinery and either flattened into the social mould or crushed out of it, but as souls, suffering and entangled in a net and to be rescued, souls growing and to be encouraged to grow, souls grown and from whom help and power can be drawn by the lesser spirits who are not yet adult.

Aim of Its Economics

The aim of its economics would be not to create a huge engine of production, whether of the competitive or the co-operative kind, but to give to men—not only to some but to all men each in his highest possible measure—the joy of work according to their own nature and free leisure to grow inwardly, as well as a simply rich and beautiful life for all.

In Its Politics

In its politics it would not regard the nations within the scope of their own internal life as enormous state machines regulated and armoured, with man living for the sake of the machine and worshipping it as his God and his larger self, content at the first call to kill others upon its altar and to bleed there himself so that the machine may remain intact and powerful and be made ever larger, more complex, more cumbrous, more mechanically efficient and entire.

It would regard the peoples as group-souls, the Divinity concealed and to be self-discovered in its human collectivities, group-souls meant like the individuals to grow according to their own nature and by that growth to help each other, to help the whole race in the one common work of humanity.

And that work would be to find the divine self in the individual and the

collectivity and to realise spiritually, mentally, vitally, materially its greatest, largest, richest and deepest possibilities in the inner life of all and their outer action and nature

Freedom of Man

For it is into the Divine within each man and each people that the man and the nation have to grow; it is not an external idea or rule that has to be imposed on them from without.

Therefore the law of a growing inner freedom is that which will be most honoured in the spiritual age of mankind

True it is that so long as man has not come within measurable distance of self-knowledge and has not set his face towards it, he cannot escape from the law of external compulsion and all his efforts to do so must be vain

He is and always must be, so long as that lasts, the slave of others, the slave of his family, his caste, his clan, his Church, his society, his nation; and he cannot but be that and they too cannot help throwing their crude and mechanical compulsion on him, because he and they are the slaves of their own ego, of their own lower nature.

We must feel and obey the compulsion of the Spirit if we would establish our inner right to escape other compulsion; we must make our lower nature the willing slave, the conscious and illumined instrument or the ennobled but still self-subjected portion, consort or partner of the Divine Being within us, for it is that subjection which is the condition of our freedom, since spiritual freedom is not the egoistic assertion of our separate mind and life but obedience to the Divine Truth in ourself and our members and in all around us

But we have, even so, to remark that God respects the freedom of the natural members of our being and that he gives them room to grow in their own nature so that by natural growth and not by self-extinction they may find the Divine in themselves

The subjection which they finally accept, complete and absolute, must be a willing subjection of recognition and aspiration to their own source of light and power and their highest being.

Therefore even in the unregenerated state we find that the healthiest, the truest, the most living growth and action is that which arises in the largest possible freedom and that all excess of compulsion is either the law of a gradual atrophy or a tyranny varied or cured by outbreaks of rapid disorder

And as soon as man comes to know his spiritual self, he does by that discovery, often even by the very seeking for it, as ancient thought and religion saw, escape from the outer law and enter into the law of freedom.

His Own Divine Law will Regulate Him

A spiritual age of mankind will perceive this truth.

It will not try to make man perfect by machinery, to keep him straight by tying up all his limbs.

It will not present to the member of the society his higher self in the person of the policeman, the official and the corporal, nor, let us say, in the form of a socialistic bureaucracy or a Labour Soviet

Its aim will be to diminish as soon and as far as possible the element of external compulsion in human life by awakening the inner divine compulsion of the Spirit within, and all the preliminary means it will use will have that for its aim.

In the end it will employ chiefly if not solely the spiritual compulsion which even the spiritual individual can exercise on those around him, and how much more should a spiritual society be able to do,—that which awakens within us in spite of all inner resistance and other denial, the compulsion of the Light, the desire and the power to grow through one's own nature into the Divine.

For the perfectly spiritualised society will be one in which, as is dreamed by the spiritual anarchist, all men will be deeply free, and it will be so because the preliminary condition will have been satisfied.

In that state each man will be not a law to himself, but the law, the divine Law, because he will be a soul living in the Divine and not an ego living mainly if not entirely for its own interest and purpose. His life will be led by the law of his own divine nature liberated from the ego.

In Diversified Oneness

The spiritual life is the flower not of a featureless but a conscious and diversified oneness.

Each man has to grow into the Divine within himself through his own individual being, therefore is a certain growing measure of freedom a necessity of the being as it develops and perfect freedom the sign and the condition of the perfect life.

But also, the Divine whom he thus sees in himself, he sees equally in all others and as the same Spirit in all.

Therefore too is a growing inner unity with others a necessity of his being and perfect unity the sign and condition of the perfect life

Not only to see and find the Divine in oneself, but to see and find the Divine in all, not only to seek one's own individual liberation or perfection, but to seek the liberation and perfection of others is the complete law of the spiritual being.

If the divinity sought were a separate godhead within oneself and not the one Divine, or if one sought God for oneself alone, then indeed the result might

be a grandiose egoism, the Olympian egoism of a Goethe or the Titanic egoism imagined by Nietzsche, or it might be the isolated self-knowledge or asceticism of the Ivory tower or the Stylites pillar

But he who sees God in all will serve freely God in all with service of love. He will, that is to say, seek not only his own freedom, but the freedom of all, not only his own perfection, but the perfection of all.

He will not feel his individuality perfect except in the largest universality, nor his own life to be a full life except as it is one with the universal life. He will not live either for himself or for the State and Society, for the individual ego or the collective ego, but for something much greater, for God in himself and for the Divine in the universe.

Science, Art, Ethics, etc.

Therefore a society which was even initially spiritualised, would make the revealing and finding of the divine Self in man the whole first aim of all its activities, its education, its knowledge, its science, its ethics, its art, its economical and political structure.

As it was to some extent in the ancient Vedic times with the cultural education of the higher classes, so it would be then with all education

It would embrace all knowledge in its scope, but would make the whole trend and aim and the permeating spirit not mere worldly efficiency, but this self-developing and self-finding.

It would pursue physical and psychical science not in order merely to know the world and Nature in her processes and to use them for material human ends, but to know through and in and under and over all things the Divine in the world and the ways of the Spirit in its masks and behind them.

It would make it the aim of ethics not to establish a rule of action whether supplementary to the social law or partially corrective of it, the social law that is after all only the rule, often clumsy and ignorant, of the biped pack, the human herd, but to develop the divine nature in the human being. It would make it the aim of Art not merely to present images of the subjective and objective world, but to see them with the significant and creative vision that goes behind their appearances and to reveal the Truth and Beauty of which things visible to us and invisible are the forms, the masks or the symbols and significant figures.

(To be continued)

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

I AM deeply touched by the agony of your whole being at the murder of one who was markedly a devotee of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The bewildered cry that has arisen from your heart and mind repeats a question that has been flung at the heavens century after century—a question all the more acute because we have had a living sense of the light and love with which the Divine has met us again and again.

I have been asked by many from Orissa: “Why has the Mother’s Grace not saved this Oriya child of hers? Why was he not protected by her from those dacoits?” No perfect answer has ever been given to such perplexities. So you can’t expect me to outshine the great doctors of theology. I can only put down some thoughts that do not seem to be skimmed from the mere surface consciousness.

First of all, service of the Mother’s cause has not to be done with the hope that one will be always immune to what a poet has called “crass casualty”—the uncertain and apparently unheeding process of events in the natural world where either a hidden determinism or else utter chance could be at play. We must carry out our work without expectation of rewards. To serve the Divine is a joy sufficient in itself if the soul is behind the service. Even otherwise one can be happy through the action of the idealistic mind to devote oneself to a great cause. Of course, it is hardly unnatural to expect the Divine’s Grace again and again during the execution of the Divine’s work, and indeed its intervention is seen quite often, but one cannot count on one’s safety and security being assured just because of one’s devotion to the Divine. In a deep sense the Divine’s true servitor always gets the Divine’s Grace, but it is not possible to sit in judgment on the mode in which this Grace comes. It may come in a most paradoxical form for the sake of some future good—even good in a future birth! Even death by murder may prove to be such a form.

There is the further fact that we live in a world of Ignorance and none of us is cut off from the general drift of world-happenings. There is a collective Karma no less than an individual Karma. As a part of a common humanity, along with being a part of the Divine’s followers, we have to be ready for failures and mishaps along with successes and windfalls. The universe we live in is too complex for cut-and-dried solutions of the problems it poses to each individual. What we have to do is to keep the firm faith that the Divine’s servitor will never be without the Divine’s Grace, but we must not prejudge how this Grace will show itself. Until the Supramental Force which Sri Aurobindo has invoked is in full sway, there is bound to be the play of untoward possibilities getting realised. However, our confidence should remain intact that whatever the look of things

the Divine Mother will never fail to use it for the benefit of her devotee-children.

At the same time we must bear in mind her statement that her blessings are basically for the soul's good, the soul's progress through prosperity or adversity. They are not for worldly success as such, though success in the world's affairs is never ruled out where it serves the soul's good or is not detrimental to it.

Ultimately, either we accept the Divine to be by very definition above the human intellect's power to understand the ways of Supernature and yet hold them to be more truly good than this intellect can conceive—or else we turn away from the Divine and take the world's course to be a witless dance, haphazardly destructive or constructive, of Democritus's or Rutherford's atoms. But how can we adopt the negative attitude, we who have looked at Sri Aurobindo's eyes of All-Knowledge and upon the Mother's smile of All-Love?

I'll close with some lines from *Savitri*:

Whatever the appearances we must bear,
 Whatever our strong ills and present fate,
 When nothing we can see but drift and bale,
 A mighty Guidance leads us still through all.¹ (22 1 1993)

*

It is only last evening that I heard of the accident. I felt extremely concerned. Has any diagnosis been made, enlightening us about the cause of the sudden black-out? A black-out means the blotting of the ordinary outward-looking consciousness. Such a blotting is not undesirable in itself, but there have to be the proper time and place. Besides, what should bring it about is not a sudden blackness but a surprising whiteness as in Aswapati's experiences:

Caught by a voiceless white epiphany...
 He neared the still consciousness sustaining all—

or

A skyward being nourishing its roots
 On sustenance from occult spiritual founts
 Climbed through white rays to meet an unseen Sun.

Here are glimpses of an ascent, a rising, but Sri Aurobindo also visions an advantageous downward movement. He tells us that our "dim being" must

Look up to God and round at the universe,
 And learn by failure and progress by fall.

¹ Centenary Ed , p 59

There is also his line about “the supreme Diplomat”:

He makes our fall a means for a greater rise.

Finally, we get the picture of an extreme possibility:

A god come down and greater by the fall

Of course, all these are not physical tumbles, but a physical tumble due to a black-out can be symbolic of a plunge of the Yoga-power into the subconscious, preliminary to a penetration of the utter abyss of the Inconscient to realise the state of existence at the very beginning of things, the buried God-state spoken of at the start of the Rigveda’s Hymn of Creation and at the end of Sri Aurobindo’s poem “Who”:

When darkness was blind and engulfed within darkness,
He was seated within it immense and alone.

My latest news about you is that your injuries—particularly those on the face—are fast healing I am very happy to hear this. (20.12.1992)

*

You have asked me to write out for you what I told you briefly this evening after returning from the Ashram. I shall try to set it down in as much detail as I can.

I was sitting quietly facing the joint Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Suddenly a voice within me addressed it: “All of me belongs to you.” The voice seemed to pervade the whole being and express every part of me. But was every part of me really speaking? I did not feel sure because I knew that much of me remained which could not be considered to have made a total surrender.

When I concentrated on my condition I discovered that the voice had a centre from which it radiated. The centre was the inmost heart. The true soul, the psychic being, was spontaneously making that statement. It was its natural joyous cry. The rest of the being was evidently fully conscious of its soul. To put it otherwise, the soul was completely aware of being a child of the Divine and its awareness flowed out and flooded every corner of the composite creature that I was. But every corner was essentially a medium for the soul’s self-giving gesture, the soul’s self-given existence. Something of every corner vibrated in unison while serving as a channel. But it was not saying, on its own, as an inherent law of itself, the simple yet wonderful words with which it was filled.

I felt somewhat concerned that this should be so—but I soon realised that

concern was out of place. I should just sit calmly without any thought and feel blessed with the soul's awakening and allow its sweetness to keep streaming forth up and down and on all sides of the bodily life

If such a state could go on at all hours in an utter intensity of what I can only call a serene strength of love, at once soft and irresistible, the future would indeed be an unperishing thousand-petalled "Rose of God." (2 1 1993)

*

Your short note of yesterday about a dream in which we made contact has sent me looking for the envelope in which I had preserved the letters from you I had been answering before my fracturing fall on October 15, 1991. I find that I stopped short of your dream of 8.5.91

This dream is indeed queer. Not that my appearing again when you had prayed for a meeting with Nolini has anything strange about it: now he and I seem to have made a composite personality in your consciousness and I wouldn't be surprised if on your calling for me he showed himself. What is odd is your riding a bicycle stark naked in search of the house in which I was staying—a house specifically understood to be not my present residence but quite another place. This place, when pointed out to you, "was a huge structure but built of clay with a thatched roof". The time was evening when I usually return from my visit to the Samadhi. You were quite alert that you might meet me on the way and you did not bother at all about your lack of clothes. At long last you decided to go back home and put on some clothes. But again you lost your way. Then suddenly you woke up from the dream. Your concluding words are: "I felt quite care-free and there was no heaviness in my mind and heart."

Your being in your birthday-suit suggests that in all your dealings with me you cast off every outer barrier and come in your "naked truth". There is no attempt to put on any appearances: there is a soul-to-soul meeting. The bicycle symbolises a swift yet simple mode of sadhana-locomotion and at the same time an eager as well as unassuming movement of the sadhak in you towards me. The building which is taken to be my residence has two striking aspects. One is its imposing hugeness and the other the primitiveness shown by its clay-substance and its thatched roof. I can read its symbolism only by saying that it represents what Sri Aurobindo has made out of the poor stuff that I am: a figure of some literary greatness expressive of the spiritual heights and breadths that are Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's, a greatness born of their Grace but not covering up the fact that this figure has still feet of clay and a head not yet radically changed from its common all-too-human nature. Within this variously composite structure is, of course, the soul that has chosen to be a child of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, a basic primal entity away from all that greatness no less than away from all that weakness and infirmity. It is the entity which is in close touch

with you, and I am sure that if you had found me in the strange structure you would have seen Amal in his birthday-suit matching your own. And it is because these two-birthday-suit-wallahs are basically dealing with each other that you woke up without any care, a mind and heart free of

the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world.

Your letter of 29.5.91 is both practical and poetic or rather poetically practical. It says:

“Does any Ashramite suffer from insomnia? Then I have a prescription—let him sing in chorus with *Savitri*’s Satyavan

The moonbeam’s silver ecstasy at night
Kissed my dim lids to sleep....

Let him also repeat in his inmost heart that Mantra from the same poem:

He is silence watching in the stars at night ”

Your apt quotations put me in mind of a snatch from Wordsworth which could also serve to transport one to an inner state which would be at once slumber and spiritual upliftment

The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

A double mystery is evoked here—at the same time far above and near at hand below. Not only are the two locations linked by the in-drawing words “silence” and “sleep” What is below is also affined to what is above by the image of upward rising earth: “hills” But the double mystery remains unresolved, unidentified. To whom does the twofold state belong? The first mode of it—

The silence that is in the starry sky—

gets a revelatory answer in Sri Aurobindo’s suggestion of a supreme Being in the nocturnal darkness with the line:

He is silence watching in the stars at night.

Immediately we are led to intuit that the entrancing Anon here of Wordsworth is the same “Presence” who is elsewhere said by him to be “interfused” with all things and

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns.

Your last letter—8.9.91—of the old bunch ends with the words: “I am going to *finish* ‘Savitri’ ” Well, can we ever do such a thing? There are various senses in which *Savitri* can never be finished. My mind harks back to Sri Aurobindo’s letter to Nirodbaran (29 3.36). “*Savitri* has not been regarded by me as a poem to be written and finished, but as a field of experimentation to see how far poetry could be written from one’s own Yogic consciousness and how that could be made creative.” Before this statement we read. “I used *Savitri* as a means of ascension. I began with it on a certain mental level, each time I could reach a higher level I rewrote from that level Moreover I was particular—if part seemed to me to come from any lower levels I was not satisfied to leave it because it was good poetry. All had to be as far as possible of the same mint.” I am sure that if Sri Aurobindo had not left his body on December 5, 1950, he would have gone on revising his epic or at least adding to it. Both procedures would have been followed in regard to the part with which you will be finishing your reading of *Savitri*—namely, “Epilogue. The Return to Earth.” A good portion of it comes from an early draft. And a few things in it pose problems which I would like to set before you.

But first let me dwell a little on the fact that we are driven by the very nature of *Savitri* to read it again and again, never getting finished with it. Sri Aurobindo sought to make it a creation of the highest plane of inspiration available to man: what he termed the Overmind, home of the poetry that embodies a seeing and a hearing which, whatever be the subject, reveals in all images and rhythms subtly or openly a sense of the Infinite, the Eternal, the Divine To share in this sense the reader has to develop his consciousness. The practice of Yoga is, of course, the most direct means, but it is also a rather difficult process. We Aurobindo-mans have to essay the difficulties. Still, it is not necessary to complete our Yogic careers before we can take advantage of a literary Yogic masterpiece like *Savitri*. *Savitri* offers the chance for a course of what I may call “aesthetic Yoga.” If we hush the ordinary noises of our brains, imagine that we have no top to our heads but are open to a vastness above them, and then read the epic audibly so as to allow its sound to aid what our sight takes in from the printed page, then we shall be on the way to doing “aesthetic Yoga” The spiritual visions and vibrations caught by Sri Aurobindo in his pentameters which seek to bring

A gate of dreams ajar on mystery’s verge

or convey

A wisdom-cry from rapt transcendences

refine, deepen, widen our beings more and more with each new reading of

The lines that tear the veil from Deity's face.

Now to the Epilogue's problems. A dictated passage—a speech of Savitri to Satyavan—has the verses:

Look round thee and behold, glad and unchanged
 Our home, this forest, with its thousand cries
 And the whisper of the wind among the leaves
 And, through rifts in emerald scene, the evening sky,
 God's canopy of blue sheltering our lives.... (pp. 717-18)

It is possible that what has been taken as a noun—"scene"—is the past participle "seen" mis-heard during the dictation. Then the sense would be: "the evening sky seen through rifts in emerald." The noun "emerald" would stand for "greenness" (here the "leaves" which form a network with "rifts" in it). Interestingly, Sri Aurobindo has such a usage elsewhere in *Savitri*. On p. 390 he speaks of the various moods in which "Earth" shows herself. One of them is her woodland aspect—

The shaggy emerald of her centaur mane—

followed by her aspect of sky:

The gold and sapphire of her warmth and blaze

The poem has also another instance of "emerald" as a noun in a context of woods and grasses. Satyavan cries to Savitri on their first meeting:

Come nearer to me from thy car of light
 On this green sward disdaining not our soil.
 For here are secret spaces made for thee
 Whose caves of emerald long to screen thy form...
 Led by my hushed desire into my woods
 Let the dim rustling arches over thee lean... (p. 408)

The likelihood of "seen" rather than "scene" seems enhanced by some lines at the very start of the Epilogue where the word "Peering" suggests an equivalent of the former reading:

Peering through an emerald lattice-window of leaves

In indolent skies reclined, the thinning day
Turned to its slow fall into evening's peace. (p. 715)

But, admittedly, here the adjectival "emerald" lends some credence to the alternative reading

A little before the "scene/seen" passage we have another bit of ambivalence. Look at the end of this passage, spoken by Satyavan:

"Whence hast thou brought me captive back, love-chained,...
For surely I have travelled in strange worlds
By thee companioned, a pursuing spirit,
Together we have disdained the gates of night;
I have turned away from the celestial's joy
And heaven's insufficient without thee "

As these lines too were dictated, it is, in the first place, doubtful whether the apostrophe in "celestial's" is properly put. Shouldn't it be after the *s*, thus: "celestials' joy"? The change would be easily granted, but a real crux comes with the next apostrophe—in "heaven's". With the apostrophe retained, we have two possible readings. One would take "joy" as understood after the word, giving us the meaning: "I have turned away from the celestials' joy and heaven's joy (which is/are) insufficient without thee." But this seems rather forced and far-fetched. The alternative reading would make "heaven's" a contraction for "heaven is". This would make the expression extremely romantic. One would hesitate to see anything possibly replacing it. But two points face the romantic interpretation. The "And" at the beginning of the line is rather inconsequential. As a summing up of Satyavan's mind and heart after his turning away from the "celestials' joy" we would expect "For". Again, isn't the present tense—"heaven is"—somewhat out of place? The entire passage has the past perfect: "Whence hast thou brought me"—"I have travelled"—"we have disdained"—"I have turned away". What may seem romantically felicitous may not be dramatically so. To endow the line with dramatic relevance we would have to drop the apostrophe altogether and make the line a continuation of what has gone before, thus.

And heavens insufficient without thee.

Then there is a turning away by Satyavan from all celestials' joy and all paradisaical states which are insufficient without Savitri. Essentially, this does not negate the romantic touch but, instead of letting it stand forth, it weaves it as a dramatic element into the general trend of the discourse. That way the mind has more satisfaction, but to the heart there is a loss and the sheer poetic thrill gets subdued.

On p. 719 comes a challenge in dictation which most readers of *Savitri* would try to avoid. We have the lines, addressed by Savitri to Satyavan

“Heaven’s touch fulfils but cancels not our earth:
Our bodies need each other in the same last;
Still in our breasts repeat heavenly secret rhythm
Our human heart-beats passionately close ”

The “last” has no meaning in this context. The only possible correction is “lust”. The general support is in the next two lines which, by the way, are to be construed with an eye to the plural verb “repeat”. “Still our human heart-beats passionately close repeat in our breasts heavenly secret rhythm.” But how shall we reconcile ourselves to that word which occurs fifteen times before in *Savitri* and everywhere with a vicious meaning? I believe we have to remember what Sri Aurobindo replied to Dilip Kumar Roy when the latter asked how Rama could be an Avatar when Valmiki attributes *kāma* (lust) to him. Sri Aurobindo pointed out that an Avatar need not come as a Yogi. Rama was an exemplar of the enlightened ethical mind and he functioned as an ideal son, an ideal brother, an ideal husband, an ideal warrior and finally an ideal king. As an ideal husband he must necessarily have *kāma*, for no sexual relationship between him and his wife would be possible without it. Just because in their relevant contexts the word “lust” occurring fifteen times earlier had evil associations, it is not inevitable that the identical word in relation to Savitri and Satyavan should have the same bearing. They being physical wife and husband with passionately close human heart-beats would naturally experience lust but with new associations proper to the wonderful woman and the marvellous man that they were.

Now I come to a challenge in verbal construction on p. 722. Satyavan’s parents have arrived with a royal retinue in search of the missing son and daughter-in-law. They rush first to the former:

And the swift parents hurrying to their child,—
Their cause of life now who had given him breath,—
Possessed him with their arms .

How would you explicate the second line? What does the relative pronoun “who” refer to? Here is a Latinised construction “Their”=“Of them”. The relative pronoun “who” goes with the understood “them”. And the sense is, in reference to Satyavan, that the thought of him as dead had drained life out of his mother and father but the discovery of him as not dead has saved them from their death-like condition. And the complicated line—“He is now the cause of the life of them who once gave him life’s breath ”

One more question and I am done. Before the whole party wend their way

home from the forest, one who seemed a priest and sage, wants to draw from Savitri, for the good of the world's future, some guide-lines won by her from her wonderful experiences. She, longing to mother all souls by uniting their life with her own, replies:

“Awakened to the meaning of my heart,
That to feel love and oneness is to live
And this the magic of our golden change
Is all the truth I know or seek, o sage.”

What does the past participle “Awakened” go with? Who has had the awakening? Surely the “I” of the last line and surely the truth known or sought is couched in the second line. So I am inclined to reduce the statement thus to prose order: “All the truth that I, awakened to the meaning of my heart, know or seek, O sage, is that to feel love and oneness is to live and this (is) the magic of our golden change.”

Perhaps I should terminate my letter by telling you that you have come to the termination of *Savitri* in the Centenary Edition by having read 23,803 lines.

(30 9.1992)

AMAL KIRAN
(K.D. SETHNA)

NIRODBARAN'S TALK ON CHAMPAKLAL

(Continued from the issue of March 1993)

HERE are some of the Notes made by Champaklal. They bring us rare truths of both his inner and outer life.

1926—While giving Sri Aurobindo's dish to me Mother said: The Being which we want to manifest in you demands complete surrender. They are four brothers. one of them wants to manifest in you and he is waiting for you to be ready He wishes that I should work in you

Another day she said: The Being has entered in you.

The Mother was seated on a chair... Meditation started and an occult workup commenced What was standing in my way was removed. When everything was finished I got up and embraced Mother. She took me in her arms and held me for a long time. I surrendered myself completely to her. She held me pressed like a child and made me a divine child.

Later I was told that when she mentioned it to Sri Aurobindo, he said: Champaklal has become a demi-god

1928—Mother said this afternoon: When you were coming with the tray of fruit juice, Sri Aurobindo saw you coming through the shutters of the Meditation Hall and said, "Champaklal looks magnificent; he looks like a priest."

It was before 1938. I used to wash Sri Aurobindo's dhoti every day and dry it. Once it so happened that I needed clips to hold the cloth for drying. It was P who presented the chit to the Mother for signing. She asked me: "Why do you want so many clips?"

"You can come and see my cloth." I said with some force.

She kept quiet But the next day, she told me very sweetly "Champaklal, you know people were saying, 'How can Champaklal talk to the Mother like that?' "

I did not realise what was wrong at all and exclaimed "What is there?"

Again she remained quiet. It was much later that I realised that something was wrong in my attitude

I wanted to offer something to the Mother I got the idea of painting two lotuses, one white and the other red Curiously I received two beautiful lotuses that day and took up the painting. When it was finished I took them to Mother with great joy on my birthday. 2 2.40.

She received the painting and said, "Oh, very pretty! Very pretty!" Then she said with a broad smile, I give it to you Champaklal! Take it, it is for you."

I did not answer, then said, "Mother, I have done it for you."

She gave another broad smile and said slowly, "Champaklal, I will take it to Sri Aurobindo and ask him to write upon it "

I said, "Mother, it so, how nice it would be if you ask him to write the significance. He will write on the white lotus and you will write on the red."

Mother brought it to Sri Aurobindo. I was there. She showed it to him and said "See, how nice it is! Today is his birthday, he has done it for me. If you write the significance on it I will give it to him. He also wishes that you write on the white lotus and I on the red "

With a beautiful affectionate smile he wrote on the top of the white lotus:

Aditi

The Divine Mother

and below the red lotus

To

Champaklal

With blessings

Sri Aurobindo

After writing he looked at me and gave a sweet smile

On the top of the red lotus Mother wrote

The Avatar

Sri Aurobindo

Mother asked me not to show them to anybody

6 2 1940

Mona Lisa

Champaklal Mother, can I show the painting now?

Mother Yes

After seeing it Mother said That is the best

Champaklal Is that so?

Mother. I think so Sri Aurobindo was the artist

Champaklal Leonardo da Vinci?

Mother smiled sweetly and said Yes

Champaklal Mother, it seems this is yours?

Mother Yes, don't you see the resemblance?

Mother put her finger on the lips and showed also the lower portion of the face

1 6.40

Mother I am very much pleased with your work

I like your faithfulness,

I like your sincerity,

I like your steadiness,

I like your regularity,
I like your courage.

24.5.44

Sri Aurobindo said about injection.

Yatha buddhistatha gatih
Yatha injection tatha gatih.

(As is the mind so is the course,
As is the injection so is the course.)

30.5 44

Dr. Manilal: Sir, when will the first transformed man appear? I am not asking of the last man.

Sri Aurobindo: Who is the first?

Manilal. I don't know, Sir; you must be knowing

Sri Aurobindo. I don't try to know I was not born for *Sadhana Siddhi* I was born only for doing Sadhana So I must remain ignorant of what you ask. Perhaps an unexpected person may come first!

Writing *Savitri*

i

Sri Aurobindo used to sit on his chair in the passage outside his room late at night after his dinner and write. He would place chit pads on the handle of the chair and write. After writing he would repeat the lines to himself. I would sit outside in the hall listening to his voice. It was so beautiful. One day he saw me there For a moment he looked surprised but immediately afterwards he smiled and proceeded with his work

9.6.44

Sri Aurobindo used at times to write on small chit pads and pin them together One day I saw him having some difficulty with the pinning, because the sheets were too many and it was not easy to pin them all together.

Pussh. he made a sound I saw that the pin had slipped. I ran to him. It was difficult indeed to do in that way Somehow I succeeded and I received a broad smile, and a look. Oh, what a look!

After that day, whenever it was needed, he would call me by name, "Champaklal"! How sweet to hear the name from his mouth! I remember I had even kept a record of how many times day and night he had called me by name.

So it was when Mother called me by name. Once Amrita told me: How lucky you are, Champak! How sweet it is to hear Mother when she calls you by name!

27.5.46

When Sri Aurobindo was on his bed, I showed him my palm and pointed out one of the lines there and told him that I wished to see how far his line had gone.

He smiled, gave me his hand to see. Then he asked, what? I said, it is very long and it is exactly what X has asked me to see. He smiled and said, oh!

2 2.47

It was my birthday. I was indeed very very happy. When the Mother came to Sri Aurobindo's room, she looked at me with a broad smile and told Sri Aurobindo: Today is Champaklal's birthday. Sri Aurobindo's response was immediate and he said "UMM" with prolonged emphasis.

(Then Champaklal gives here a long account of how he managed to take Sri Aurobindo's footprint without inconveniencing him in any way. We saw the whole operation: how cleverly he manipulated it! After drawing the feet, he took the paper to Sri Aurobindo for writing his name and blessings. Which he did gladly. We are indeed grateful to Champaklal for preserving Sri Aurobindo's footprints in this way.)

17.4.48

Mother used to receive some persons at night .. Today it was past eleven p.m. and yet she had not finished. Sri Aurobindo enquired who was there with Mother. Half an hour passed, still the person continued. Sri Aurobindo asked "Why is Mother keeping him so long? He is still there?"

22.9.48

Today Mother was not well. A notice had been put on the board to the effect. And yet she went down, gave pranam. She was so tired that I could not bear to see her. Tears rolled out of my eyes. I went and informed Sri Aurobindo about it. He said, "She ought not to go down." Next day also she went down.

This was not the only occasion when she did so. People have no idea how much she exerted herself and in what conditions

24 5.49

I was always at my best with Sri Aurobindo With Mother it was different; my behaviour with her was exactly as it was with my physical mother whom I had served in the same way. I remember her saying that only a girl could have served like that

Mother has trained me orally. Sri Aurobindo through look and smile. I have served Mother but I have not known her

23.7.49

Mother said this morning: People think I am sleeping but I do not sleep. I go

deep inside. But all the while I know all about my surroundings. I hear even the clock.

11.8.49

A propos of cure of diseases Mother said that the contemporary biggest doctor of France had told her that only strong will cures human diseases. Medicine only helps and increases one's faith. Her own experience corroborates the doctor's view. She said that physiologically some kind of white cells form and fight against diseases. These cells increase when a strong will is exerted.

10 9.49

Mother said that once she did not take anything—not even a drop of water for ten full days. Since then she got acidity and it was still continuing. In another context she said: The most important thing is not to fear at all under any condition.

.. Even if the heart be bad, there be appendicitis or liver trouble, the way to cure is to have absolutely no fear and have a strong will.

13.10.49

Sri Aurobindo's dinner started at 12 52 a.m. and lasted till 1 15 a.m.

At one time, there were lots of mosquitoes in Sri Aurobindo's room and he was bitten by them. He would rub an ointment on the bitten places. Afterwards he would call me by name and I would rush by his side. He would show me the places and I would rub the ointment there.

The joy at the touch of his body, the joy while rubbing the ointment is indescribable. So, too, what I felt when he would put his arm around me while walking; it is unimaginable.

S has brought a picture of Durga and shown it to Sri Aurobindo. He said: Very living image, very spirited image. It is full of life, especially the lion biting the hand of the Asura is very living and also the posture of the goddess. That was one quality about the Indian sculptors that they could put spirit into the things and life and expression which the European sculptors could not do. The posture of Durga is very natural and also the hands.

10 8.50

Today it was 11 a.m. when Mother came with Sri Aurobindo's lunch—very unusual. She had brought with her one small dish with a small bowl on it—some bread slices and a knife.

This was the first and last time we saw them taking food together. It was a rare event.

1964

I once asked Mother You say I am your child and I was so in my previous births also But I have a strong feeling that I was the son of a Rishi

Mother replied How do you know that I was not the Rishi?

1966

I mentioned to Mother that I wished to donate one eye for anybody who needed it If Mother did not approve of it, then both the eyes would stand donated after death

On hearing it, the Mother said, “No, no, no Your eyes belong to me This is a hostile suggestion I do not approve of this giving of eyes at all.”

In the course of some remarks Mother said. I want three kinds of people, those who can work, those who do Sadhana, those who have money At least one of these things must be there in each When I say sadhana, it is not a nominal sadhana, but the true sadhana

(To be continued)

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of March 1993)

The Mother's Message

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



ON the morning of 26th December 1967 I went into the music-cum-interview room with the file of four hundred and sixty-five passages of *Savitri* which the Mother had recited and which had been put under the *Savitri* paintings when they were exhibited on 10th February 1967.

There was a volume of *Savitri* beside me. I started turning the pages of the file but could not set my heart to it. Also there was nothing to be arranged in the

room because there was no work to be done with the Mother. So I walked restlessly to and fro

I stood still when she entered the room and greeted me with a few flowers and her refreshing smiles.

I received the flowers with trembling hands. I was exceedingly nervous that day. My heart was heavy.

The Mother sat on her high-backed carved chair and gave me a bouquet from a side-table and packets of soups. I could not look at her while receiving them, because my eyes were brimming with tears. I was hunting for words, trying to restore a semblance of normality to my manner.

She asked me to sit near her feet. I did so. Then she took my hands into hers, looked deeply into my eyes and went into a trance. I could not meditate. My hands started aching. My thoughts jostled unchecked. I was assailed by a terrible sense of hopelessness.

Gradually the Mother opened her luminous eyes and looked at me. I thought that now I had to take my leave. Meanwhile she asked me.

“Child, have you brought anything to show me?”

I said: “Yes, Mother, this file—those passages—will you please explain them to me and allow me to take down your explanations on the recorder? Then surely people will understand the *Savitri* paintings more easily.”

Once again she went into a trance for a moment or two and said enthusiastically:

“If I have to explain these passages, I would rather prefer to start from the very beginning and give a full explanation of the whole of *Savitri*.”

I could not believe my ears. Still my gaze rested on her face. Then unconsciously I pushed aside the file and took in my hands the volume of *Savitri* which had been lying near me, and pressed it against my heart, without a word, and stared at her. My eyes filled with tears of happiness and gratitude. I kissed her hand. Relief began to flow through my whole being.

The Mother understood my feeling. She embraced me and kissed my forehead. Her smile was so radiant, so infectious, so charming and above all friendly. I responded to it.

While coming from her I felt as if the whole burden of stress and strain had slipped off my mind. She filled my heart with hope of future work and with the fragrance of her peace and Presence.

As a matter of fact, it had already been planned in the Mother’s vision long ago before I came to stay near her.

Once the Mother revealed to a small group of Sadhaks soon after the first

one-volume Edition of *Savitri* had been published in 1954 by the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre.

“*Savitri* is occult knowledge and spiritual experience. Some part of it can be understood mentally—but much of it needs the same knowledge and experience for understanding it. Nobody here except myself can explain *Savitri*. One day I hope to explain it in its true sense.”

It was beyond my capacity to express anything through mere words except that I consider myself the most fortunate person in the whole world.

The following morning the Mother sent me a card shaped like the flower Eucharis—“Light without obscurity”—with a quotation:

“O immutable peace, deliver men from ignorance, may full and pure Light reign everywhere.”

She added:

“With all my love.”

*

Now it was the New Year 1968.

On Thursday the 11th I saw the Mother in the afternoon. I offered the sandalwood lotion I had prepared for her and a few flowers.

She gave me a bouquet and a copy of *Savitri* on which she had written:

“To Huta
With blessings for a perfect understanding.”

While handing the copy to me she recited one line of it and advised me:

“When you read *Savitri* you must read loudly but slowly and clearly.”

Then she looked at me for quite a long time, and kissed my forehead. The next day I received a card from her with these words.

“Let your thoughts be filled with the Divine’s Truth and your heart be filled with the Divine’s Love.”

This was the beginning of my new life, new work, new consciousness.

*

On the morning of 18th January 1968 the Mother and I commenced our work on *Savitri*.

As we went on, the Mother uncovered Sri Aurobindo's visions and hers of the New World expressing the Supramental Light, Consciousness, Force and Delight

She disclosed their effect on the cells of the body. She took only the theme of *Savitri* as the starting-point and, when the right time came, spoke about the action of the New Consciousness which had manifested since the beginning of the year 1969 according to her own message of April 1.

Her recitations of *Savitri* and her comments were recorded by me and later transcribed

I wrote in bold letters on many big thick sheets of hand-made paper the verses of *Savitri* for the Mother to recite.

After the recitations I passed on to her sheet after sheet. I took them back when she had finished. I had to look into the book to see whether the verses were recited without missing any word. At the same time I had to watch the two flickering green lights of the tape-recorder lest they should touch each other and her voice crack on the tape. All the time I had to be alert, careful.

Also I fanned her with a Japanese hand-fan, since all the windows were to be closed because of the outside noise. She never liked the ceiling-fan or the table-fan.

After the recitations the Mother went into a profound meditation for half an hour or sometimes even more.

I had to be vigilant—I never knew when she would open her eyes and start giving her comments. As a matter of fact, I too felt like entering into a trance because of some unknown pressure and the heavenly atmosphere. I could hardly keep my eyes open.

Thus I had to do these jobs all at a time and all alone.

If I had not kept patience, perseverance, presence of mind and peace in my heart, I could never have continued working with the Mother.

Moreover, her vibrations were so powerful, so intense that it was difficult to remain with her more than two hours, because here she showed me her true divinity. Besides, she invoked Sri Aurobindo's Presence.

The Mother gave me a very good training both physically and mentally.

*

On 28th January the Mother named the new work *About Savitri*. She explained to me in great detail the first painting of *About Savitri*, Vol. I. She liked my painting but in some places I was asked to alter things a little. I did the needful.

Days passed. One day the Mother confirmed:

“Now I have caught the exact thing regarding the work—now I know what Sri Aurobindo wants me to do ”

On 11th March she said:

“You see, *Savitri* is very good for me also Because while I read and recite, I do not think at all I am only inspired. I need this experience.”

I asked: “Ah, Mother, you don’t really need anything because you are the Divine, aren’t you?” She laughed and stated:

“Yes, that I am but this is physical (*pointing out her body*) And here is the physical world and it must be perfected. In fact, nothing is enough for me.”

*

Usually she went into a deep trance for quite a long time. When she awoke, she revealed:

“It is really very good I like it When I concentrate and go back to the origin of the creation, I see things as a whole in their reality—and then I speak.”

On Thursday the 30th May 1968 the Mother recited the following passage:

“Here where our half-lit ignorance skirts the gulfs
On the dumb bosom of the ambiguous earth,...
Unwanted, fading from the mortal’s range ”

She gave her comment on the lines.

Then after the work, suddenly she slid into meditation. On awaking, she said with a smile:

“You see, each time when I speak, Sri Aurobindo comes here. And I speak exactly what he wants me to speak. It is the inner hidden truth of *Savitri* that he wants me to reveal.

Each time he comes, a wonderful atmosphere is created.

I have read *Savitri* before but it was nothing compared to this reading.”

The Mother and I worked till 31st July 1970 Then unhappily our work stopped for ever.

When the Mother's voice was all right, she could work on *Savitri*. The Mother and I loved our work immensely. But unfortunately most of our time was taken away by other people and visitors. So there was not enough time for this heart-warming work. I felt it was a great loss for the whole of humanity. In whatever time that remained, the Mother and I used to meditate.

She recited the passage No 18 of Book One Canto Four on 31st July 1970.

“A consciousness that knows not its own truth
inane ”

Her comments ran:

“This is the world as it seems to the eyes of an ignorant vanity that lives without knowing, sees without understanding and is cut off from its Origin.

The why of all this is hidden, and unless it is discovered and lived consciously, life will always be an incoherent horror.

But we are here to discover, to know and to live, and we can bear the horror with the certitude that the Light, the Knowledge and the Purpose will be one day manifested.

With patience and firmness and quiet assurance we must go on, we must endure and we must realise ”

This was her last explanation. Here our work *About Savitri* came to an end. She signed my files in which I had transcribed her comments.

It was 29th March 1972. I offered to the Mother twelve copies of *About Savitri* Part I consisting of Book One Canto One, which had been printed at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press.

She asked me:

“Child, where is your copy?”

I said: “At home.”

Then at once she asked me to pull out one copy from the bundle. I did so. She wrote in it:

“To Huta

With love and appreciation and blessings.”

I also offered the tapes of her recitations of *Savitri* and her comments and the files of the typed scripts regarding the work of *About Savitri*. She refused to accept them and told me firmly:

“I will not keep them here You will keep them with you—they are yours—you are in charge of them I am giving them to you with my blessings.”

(To be continued)

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ON THE WAY TO THE SURKHANDADEVI TEMPLE (NEAR MUSSORIE)

ABOVE is the deep blue sky
 Seen through dark-green leaves
 That rustle and sing as the breeze
 From the east cools my brow and freshens
 My breath, that panting laboured heaving
 Becomes slowly painless as I climb
 To the Mother's abode at the top.

Her temple looks so near
 Yet needs sound of Her name
 To push forward one step
 After another
 Below stretch from horizon to horizon
 Mountain tops, some green and vibrant,
 Some bare and raw and rocky cliffs.

I pause awhile and take deep breaths,
 The galloping heart quietens and
 A mighty hush enters through all senses
 Into my veins and limbs and lungs and mind,
 An immense calm and joy—
 Infinite solitude fragrant
 With a mighty solicitude

DINKAR PALANDE

KAMESHWAR

A MEMOIR

KAMESHWARA, bearing one of the auspicious names of Lord Siva, specially significant in 'Lalita Sahashra Nama', was born on 7th November 1904, (just six years before Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry), in a Brahmin family in Ongole in Andhra Pradesh. The full name given to him at birth was Panchala Varapu Kameshwara Rao. After finishing his preliminary education up to Matriculation he took up the family profession of Karnam (Village Patil). The next step in life was marriage. But neither the profession nor the married life interested our Kameshwara Rao who was bent on the Spiritual Life from his very boyhood. At an early age he had started practising various types of traditional Sadhanas which were prevalent in those days. One of them was Master C.V.V. Yoga. With the help of a devoted wife he intensified his Sadhana; but the benefits derived were not what he had yearned for. He began an earnest searching for a real Guru, the Guru of his soul. In an aspiration and an effort that were sincere and intense he heard a name for the first time that went ringing to the depths of his soul, bringing light and delight. That was the name of SRI AUROBINDO. This was in 1926, just when Sri Aurobindo had attained the Overmind Siddhi, which made possible the descent of the Sri Krishna Consciousness and had retired into seclusion. From then our aspirant was on pins and needles, counting the minutes and seconds to have the Divya Darshan of the great Jagadguru. At last his desired wish was granted in 1928. He came to the Ashram that was just taking shape with its few disciples and he had the Darshan of the Jugala Murthi—the Mother and Sri Aurobindo—two great Yugavatars. Once the fish was caught by the kite, it could not escape. So he used to come regularly for Darshan and the frequency of his visits and the duration of his stays increased. In 1936 he took the bold and final step of settling here with his consenting wife. The permission was granted and he came and settled down.

On his arrival one day later than the scheduled date, Nolini-da told him, "Why are you so late? Mother is waiting for you." After explaining his delay, unavoidable yet unpardonable as the Guru had to wait for his arrival whereas in the Indian custom the disciple waits for the God, for Guru Darshan, Guru Kripa, Guru Prasad, he went up with his father, his wife, two close relatives and well-wishers, for the Divine Mother's Darshan. The Mother with all Her smiles and love as the loving Mother pardoning their delay, kindly blessed them and permitted them to stay on permanently. His father, after a few days' stay, had to go back to take up the burden which his son had abandoned when he came away to God. This couple stayed on till the journey's end as pilgrims of the Spiritual Path. Kameshwar now belonged to this path and this place. For his stay he was given a room in Prasad House, where food for Sri Aurobindo was prepared. Sri

Aurobindo gave him the name KAMESHWAR, thus cutting off the family tie and the title. He was given work in Golconde Construction under an able Engineer-Sadhak—Chandulal. The construction site was very near to his residence, which was just behind the Ashram.

Later, after the passing away of his wife at an early age, the Mother gave him the work of the Bureau Central. This was the office which registered the arrival and departure of the visitors to the Ashram, issued them permits for taking their meals at the Dining Hall, as well as arranged domestic servants for the inmates of the Ashram. For some time he and Jyotin-da used to go to the Sadhaks' houses to collect their laundry and give it back after the washing. This laundry service which they had started with the blessings of the Mother has in time undergone a tremendous change, and today it caters to the needs of the 2000 inmates of the Ashram and another 1000 devotees and visitors. At the same time Kameshwar was connected with the Ashram Bank Work. He served also as the P.R.O. between the town and the Ashram. Kameshwar was well acquainted with all the top officials and officers of Pondicherry Town and State. With his pleasing personality, long curly hair, longer beard swaying in the air while walking or talking, he was liked and loved by one and all. His words were always sweet and lovable, while his left hand moved on his white and bright beard which was becoming shorter and shorter as his health began to fail. He could be seen in the court, Registration Office, in the railway station as well as in the police station, with the politicians and philosophers. In all he acted with the Mother's permission and obtained clear instructions from Her. He was available whenever and wherever he was needed. He was like Narada, equally welcomed by all. Sometimes he found himself in awkward positions in dealing with various causes and quarrels. Seeing his capacity and capability to respond to Her Force and Guidance the Mother entrusted him with the work of settling the disputes and differences of the inmates of the Ashram and also help and assist them in their needs and necessities.

Such was Kameshwar, helpful in almost all the walks of life of our Ashram.

Once, he was entrusted with the work of bringing some medicine for Sri Aurobindo from outside the borders of Pondicherry. On this occasion Kewal Singh, the then Governor of Pondicherry, immediately rang and informed all the check-posts not to check or stop this particular car plying on an urgent errand of the Ashram. So the medicine was brought which helped Sri Aurobindo. This service to his Guru and God was undertaken by Kameshwar with all his love and devotion as Guruseva.

Kameshwar's actions and services were not limited and restricted to the Ashram. As the Ashram was going on expanding with more and more people joining it, and it extended its hand to help in the construction of an International City, AUROVILLE, Kameshwar's zone of work also extended to Auroville in land-acquisition from the local people for a reasonable amount. The people were

naturally unwilling to part with their lands, for they would become homeless and hopeless in their own home-towns. But Kameshwar acted as a go-between for the Divine Plan and the human condition. He had to take into consideration all the good feelings he had for the people of the land and at the same time remain an aspirant to help and fulfill the Divine Will. He had to make the people understand the purpose of the great International city coming up and the good fortune they had to become the citizens of such a Divinely willed and planned city,—one whose like had never yet existed on earth, with the great temple, Matrimandir, in the centre. This was not only a prestigious and beneficial thing but also a matter of great pride for partaking in the Divine Work.

It was a sight to see him in a rickshaw waving his hands, raising his hand in a cheerful manner to all young and old, men and women with a lovable attitude, always saying in various languages,—Namaste bhai, namascaramandi, Bon jour bhai, enquiring after their health and happiness. He had become in a way Vishwachetana, Vishwamanava—a universal mind and man. There was not a single street where he was not known and respected. After the passing away of his beloved wife, he was given the Bureau Central office as his residence. It was close to the Vinayak temple and so was known as Temple House. Just as he was the link between the town and the Ashram, he was also the link between the servants and the Sadhaks of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

He was the constant companion of our Nolini Kanta Gupta, generally known as Nolini-da, who had accompanied Sri Aurobindo in many of his past lives, from the time of the Mahabharata War, the Trojan War, during the French Revolution, and even during the Indian Freedom Struggle he was in Alipore Jail with Sri Aurobindo and came away to Pondicherry to participate in the Integral Yoga. Kameshwar was somehow associated with Nolini-da, specially on his trips to the Sports Ground,—in the beginning on cycles, later according to the Mother's instructions, in a car—for jogging or running on the track till Nolini-da himself gave up going to the Sports Ground due to his old age and infirmity.

Kameshwar was partly a Tantric. He practised Tantra with the Guru Nilakantha Sastry from Rameshwaram. He was connected with many major and minor gurus and maths, monasteries, ashrams, sadhus, swamis, babas, bairagis. He moved like a mud-fish amidst all of them without getting stained or tainted. His faith in the Gurus and his devotion to them and his Gurubhais was never shaken or taken away by other interests.

He was deeply interested in Carnatic music, vocal and instrumental, specially Tyagaraja Kritis and he himself could sing tolerably well. But he was very good in Bharata Natyam. His Siva-Tandava was well appreciated. In dramas he could act well any given role, from the sage, saint, common man, magician or drummer. Thus he was not only liked by all the Ashramites but also by almost all the people of the town of all castes and classes.

One of Kameshwar's most popular acts took place in the Playground years

ago He took part in a comedy-dance with an English visitor—A.L. Crampton-Chalk—as partner. They both wore funny masks and did an extempore burlesque in front of the Mother. Their sudden movements and co-responsive gestures created such a hilarious show that the Mother was caught in ripple after ripple of laughter. In fact she said afterwards that she had never laughed so much in her life.

Such was our loving friend, a true Sadhak, a model Karmayogi, who aspired after an Integral Yoga. He was admitted in our Ashram Nursing Home owing to his advanced age and prolonged back-pain. After a few days he passed away peacefully, or shall we say merged in his beloved Master Sri Aurobindo on 9th December at 11-20 P.M., an anniversary of the date on which the Master's own body had been laid in Samadhi. Perhaps he is more needed by our Mother and Master in their subtle-physical world to help in their stupendous work of the New Creation.

Om namo bhagavate Sri Aurobindāya was the Mantra he used to utter, not loudly, but audibly again and again. The Ashram will ever remember him as one among the chosen disciples of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

May the world have more of such persons.

KAILAS

(Based on the data supplied by Kameshwar's friend Rajugaru, by the author's own personal contact and, in one instance, by Amal Kiran)

SUNDARAM—THE POET

A TALK BY ANUBEN AMBALAL PURANI

(Continued from the issue of March 1993)

So far, Sundaram's life was a lonely journey. With this new awareness, with this new Light within, he at last found a companion, a companion whom everyone searches for and some are lucky to find. He at last was ready for love, for true and deep human love. For, that love demands a certain preparation, a certain growth. Not all human beings are capable of giving or receiving it, and some never even taste the depths of true human love. He describes an event which took place one evening with his beloved. His language shows us the ardour of an intoxicated lover. He calls the poem "That Lovely Evening".

That Lovely Evening

On that lovely evening,
With lovelier, luscious limbs,
You were standing,
Your graceful body resting
At the doorway, creeperlike.

To feel? to touch? to kiss?
My being wavered. My heart would not consent,
This superb, sculptured charm,
For an embrace was meant.
In her beauty's golden lure, it froze

I resolved to retreat
I stepped back and beheld
From her garment's guarded pleat
Shot out an arm, Cupid's arrow.
And her body, arched like a stringed bow,
She thundered. 'You cannot go!'

I could not make a move
Neither this way nor that,
Nearer nor farther.
On a dumbfounded rock
Standing single in the silenced seas
My ship had shattered

Like a life-saving boat,
Towards a wreck
You glided towards me.

To feel? to touch? to hold?
You did not, puzzled, pause,
 O purity!
 On that lovely night,
You, a lovelier sight.

*

Thus love came in a blaze of beauty to Sundaram. We can see that there was an unseen hand guiding his destiny. And it wouldn't allow him to rest with this surface experience of love. He had to understand that when you truly love, love and adoration become the same thing. His love deepened and he forgot the distinction between love and adoration. And he found divinity in the person he loved and it was almost an occult experience through which he passed. He describes it in his poem 'I Saw Thee' and finally tells us that it truly was an occult experience

(1) I SAW THEE

From that far,
From so near,
I have seen you.

Someone's lovely at a distance,
Someone's comely when close by.
But near or far,
Charming you are,
For ever unchanged,
Ever comely, ever lovely, enchantress.

I was wondering:
How did it happen—
This fragment from heaven
Fallen to earth?

Questioning, I shut my eyes.
A curtain opened to reveal
The universal chakra, the ever-rotating wheel,

Whose bars were golden shafts of light,
The rim a brilliant rainbow.

And at the centre-hub
A statuesque beauty sweet
Shone upon her lotus seat.

The soft sparks of the clustered stars
Gathered in her hands, raised rose-red
As if in blessings
Her intent gaze seemed to say:
 'I have known you for centuries.
 I am awaiting you ever since '

I implored her
'Bestow on this impoverished earth
A beauty, that everyone, from everywhere,
In every way could always receive
From your compassion's cascade,
May no one ever go unslaked.'

Her luminous lips shone more
In an answering smile;
Then from that circling wheel
She snatched a shaft and shot at me
Her blade of beauty
Her lips still alit with the same sweetness.

I sank into a soothing slumber
Where did she strike,
I do not remember

When my eyes awoke,
I saw you there on earth,
The self-same beauty, that very charm;
The symbol of my prayers
Perfected, personified

I look at you again and again,
From far and near,
With open eyes or shut,
You are present,

Always, everywhere.
 O beauty incarnate,
 There is none your like down here.

This story, occult—eh?
 Why did I recount it to-day?

Sundaram's destiny did not rest with his adored love. He had to learn to outgrow his individuality and all his ideals, his love had to grow vaster, it had to include the whole of the universe. When he had that experience he wrote it in a short poem entitled 'My Blossoms'.

MY BLOSSOMS

When my buds bloomed,
 My heart with their pollen was so imbued,
 The melodies of earth, all waned to nought.

When my love opened
 My being so awakened
 That its intense glow
 Dimmed the firmament fires.

But all my flowers faded, and my love,
 They shrank, dried and drooped.
 So too swooned my life crying, alas!

Came evening
 The twilight tune tiptoed to midnight.
 My eyelids opened I absorbed
 The magnanimous blue-black of the dark.

And I found my flowers, twinkling in the stars.
 And I witnessed my love, delight in every heart

With this widening Sundaram was ready to meet his master. It is around this time that he came to Sri Aurobindo Ashram. When I first saw him he gave me the impression of someone who was very refined and cultured. He went back to Gujarat. But the lure of this place, the attraction of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo had to bring him back here. He saw Sri Aurobindo for the first time, and wrote a poem 'on Him'. This, his first poem on seeing Sri Aurobindo, is a proclamation of Sri Aurobindo's divinity. He describes Sri Aurobindo as a

second Vaamana, who conquered many worlds with one step and brought back things about which humanity had been only dreaming and hoping—‘SRI AUROBINDO’

SRI AUROBINDO

O thou, who having crossed all human shores
Hast in a single step conquered the seven nether worlds
And in another all the higher spheres,
Dwellest here on earth, a calm immeasurable soul.

There, whence return man’s body, brain and heart
Defeated, lost, thou hast founded thy haven,
And upon this earth, godlike, seekest to create
The transcendental’s cham of divine dwellings
Where thy superconscience would glow in ecstasy.

The unbridled bulk of world-destroying energies
Thou holdest, like a flower between thy fingers,
While in the cupped hollow of thy hands smoothly sway
The unfathomed ocean-whirls of stupendous light.
As melt and flow the frozen mountain peaks
Thy inexhaustible divine compassion friendly flows
Into waters the world never tasted before.

O thou, magnanimous flaming fire,
Blissful, brilliant, benevolent,
What oblations could quench the intensity
Of thy infinite sacrificial flames?

After some time, Sundaram became an inmate of the Ashram. In the Ashram each person has to try and bring out his inner experience into his outer life. Sundaram too tried this in his own way. He brought out a Gujarati Quarterly magazine which he called ‘Dakshina’. And in that magazine he was the first to start certain new columns, like giving the readers the important news regarding the Ashram and encouraging his young students to write good prose and poems in Gujarati which he published in ‘Dakshina’.

Very soon, Sundaram translated the Mother’s little booklet ‘The Ideal Child’ into Gujarati and published it as ‘Adarsh Balak’. Almost immediately Purani and Sundaram took up the big work—naturally with the Mother’s Blessings—of reaching ‘Adarsh Balak’ to every child in Gujarat. And both of them went to Gujarat, and with the help of devotees there, organised a ‘Shibir’,

a spiritual camp Thus began a chain of Shibir, at different places in Gujarat—and elsewhere too—where the devotees gathered together for a few days around Purani and Sundaram and tried to concentrate on the Mother and Sri Aurobindo during this entire period.

In one such Shibir, at Ganganath—(the temple which, on the bank of our sacred river Narmada, Sri Aurobindo had visited) a few devotees requested Sundaram to ask the Mother's permission to start in Gujarat a new city similar to Auroville near Pondicherry In spite of all the difficulties involved in this venture, Sundaram was not at all discouraged He asked the Mother's permission and She graciously gave it, and also gave the new city a name: 'Ompuri' It took him a couple of years to get the land and to collect the money for it Finally he was able to lay the foundation stone of the new city of 'Ompuri'.

By that time he could feel that his health was failing So he decided to make a board of trustees and he handed over the responsibility of the new city to the board.

Last year Sundaram passed away. I went to see him for the last time. And I was satisfied to see his face because his face reflected all that he must have acquired in his inner life. There was great peace and calm, and a detachment. It was so great that somehow I was reminded of the Buddha.

Thus ended an adventurous and beautiful life, somewhat like the Christmas tree which shines and glimmers with many gifts

I would like to evaluate Sundaram's great output in literature before closing our talk today. He translated certain plays from Sanskrit, he translated some books from German into Gujarati and of course many works of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Besides that he wrote many short stories. Once, when I met him, I asked him, "Why don't you write short stories now?" He said, "You know, to write those stories I have to go down and I don't feel like going down." Yes, truly those stories were very much the play of the vital, the colour of the vital And, further, he has written a great volume on criticism He calls it 'Arvaachin Kavita'. Before he wrote this volume he read about 800 books and now it is considered a milestone in Gujarati literature And I think that book was the expression of his brilliant analytical mind and his clarity of thinking and expression. Lastly, you have read, you have heard his poems which were truly the expression of his aspirations, of his intense experiences

Looking back on that life, I remember a Gujarati poet His name is Dhiro. He wrote a muktak, i.e., a two-line poem In it, Dhiro says: "Taranaa othe dungar re, dungar koi dekhe nahi" Which means—"There is a huge mountain behind a blade of grass but nobody can see the mountain." It's the same with us.

Thank you

(Concluded)

VYASA'S TALE OF SAVITRI IN THE MAHABHARATA

A VERSE-BY-VERSE RENDERING INTO ENGLISH

(Continued from the issue of March 1993)

V: *Satyavan's Death, the Dialogue between Yama and Savitri, his Granting to her Several Boons, Satyavan's Coming back to Life, and the Return of Satyavan and Savitri to the Ashram.*

Markandeya said:

1. Then Satyavan, lustrous in strength, and helped by his wife, collected a basketful of fruits and began chopping the fire-wood
2. But, while splitting the logs, he started sweating profusely and, as a result of that hard labour, suffering a severe headache
3. Tormented by this pain of exertion as he was, he went closer to his loving wife and told her: There is a cleaving headache that has come to me due to this hard work.
4. And, O Savitri, all my limbs are in agony and there is a burning sensation in my heart, I find myself gravely indisposed, O One of few words.
5. It appears to me as though sharp spears are being driven through my head; I wish to lie down, O Blessed and Auspicious, as I have no strength to remain standing
6. Savitri, finding him so, immediately went closer to her husband and sat on the ground and took his head in her lap.
7. Remembering what Narad had said that devout Woman, observer of the ascetic practices, began reckoning the day, the time, even the hour and the moment.
8. Within a short while she saw present there a bright person in red attire, with a tiara on his head, handsome and brilliant he looked as though the Sun-God himself had appeared there.
9. His body, dark in hue, was lustrous, and his eyes were blood-red, and he had a noose in his hand which inspired great fright; standing close to Satyavan he was steadfastly gazing at him

10 She, noticing him there, laid aside her husband's head on the ground and stood up with folded hands and, trembling in her heart, spoke thus to him.

Savitri said:

11. I take you to be some noble god as you have a form other than the human; if it pleases you, pray tell me who you are and what you propose to do, O god!

Yama said:

12. O Savitri, as you are devoted to your husband, and as you practise askesis, I can converse with you; know me, O virtuous Lady, to be Yama

13. Your husband Satyavan, earth-born as he is, his life is over and I have come to bind him forcibly and take him away with me; yes, this is what I propose to do.

Savitri said:

14 O Lord, what I have heard is that you send your subordinates when human beings are concerned; and how is it then that you have come here yourself in person, O Master?

Markandeya said:

15. When asked in this manner, the King-father Lord duly began narrating everything, all in a sequence, for her satisfaction and happiness.

16. As he is a soul fixed in the dharma and has beautiful features and is an ocean of noble qualities, it is not proper that he be taken by them; for this reason I have come myself in person.

17. Then Yama pulled out with force Satyavan's soul, the person no bigger than the thumb, who is fettered by his body and subject to it

18. With the departure of the life-breath his respiration ceased; his body, bereft of all lustre, remained immobile and was not pleasing to look at.

19. Yama then tied up the soul and started moving towards the South; and Savitri, afflicted with agony, went behind Yama, following in his steps. That Lady, devoted to her husband, could do this having obtained the siddhi, the fulfilment, of the vow.

Yama said.

20. Savitri, turn back and attend to the funeral rites of the dead, you have now paid the debt to your husband and are free of it; as far you could go with him, you have come.

Savitri said:

21. Wheresoever lies the destiny of my husband, or wheresoever he goes of his own, there must I follow him, that is the eternal dharma, the conduct of righteousness
22. By austerity, devotion to the preceptors, love for the husband, observance of the holy vow, and by your grace, there is nothing that my going with him can arrest.
23. Knowers of the science of reality proclaim that by taking seven steps with a person a friendly relationship is established with him; honouring our friendship in that, I shall tell you something to which please listen.
24. Those who are not self-possessed, even though they may stay in a forest, they cannot practise dharma, or go by the preceptors, or undertake austerities. The wise who know discrimination hold happiness to lie in the dharma alone, therefore the sages give to dharma such pre-eminence.
25. Following one's own dharma, approved by those who are established in the truth, one knows the path which takes one to the goal; therefore, one should not covet the second, or the third, person's dharma, the dharma which the sages hold to be excellent.

Yama said:

26. O Unblamable, return now; in true accent and knowing the letters well and making the right use of the words, and with the proper reasoning that you speak, I am pleased with you. Ask for a boon which I shall grant but excluding life for the dead

Savitri said.

27. My father-in-law has lost his kingdom and is an exile, abiding in the forest, and he is blind; I desire that the King may, by your grace, gain his sight and be mighty and glorious like the sun.

Yama said:

28. O Unblamable, I grant you the boon you have asked for and it will be so; but I see that, by walking a great distance, you are exhausted. Return therefore that you may not be more tired by this exertion.

Savitri said:

29. How can I be tired when close I am to my husband? Where dwells my husband, indeed, there I shall be. Wheresoever you will be taking my Lord,

I too must go thither; O Sovereign of the World, listen again to what I shall say

30. Company with the virtuous, even though for a short while, is a highly cherished occasion, being in their friendship is said to be greater still; association with holy persons is never fruitless Therefore, one should always be close to them

Yama said:

- 31 O young fair Lady, what you have said is most salutary for all and I am pleased with it; the learned too hail it greatly in the increase of intelligence. Ask for yet another boon but not that of the life of Satyavan.

Savitri said.

- 32 My wise father-in-law has lost his kingdom and may that come back to him as before, he is my preceptor and let him never abandon the dharma. This by the second boon I ask of you

Yama said:

- 33 Soon and without difficulty shall the King regain his lost kingdom and never will he depart from Righteousness; O Princess, now what you desired is granted to you Return therefore that the journey may not weary you.

Savitri said:

34. O Ordainer, God, great in poise, the Law you uphold for the welfare of the creatures and to different worlds you take them according to your wishes; and that is why everywhere you are well-known as Yama. But please listen to what I am going to address to you

35. Not to hurt anyone with thought, or with word, or with act, but to give away in charity and always show kindness is indeed the dharma of the virtuous.

- 36 Creatures of this world generally live a short life and man is prone to spend away his strength; but the noble and saintly are kind, in your manner, even to the enemy when he approaches them

Yama said:

- 37 O bright eminent Lady, in the like way a thirsty person becomes happy on getting water, I am so much pleased by your words, therefore, again, but not for the life of Satyavan, ask for another boon that you most desire.

Savitri said

38. Sonless is my father, the Lord of the Earth, and hence grant to him the

fatherhood of a hundred sons of his own that his line may continue to grow; From you this is the third boon I wish to get.

Yama said:

39 O noble Lady, a hundred illustrious sons shall be born this way for your father to perpetuate his race, but now, O Princess, your wish granted, return, for quite far have you come on this path here

Savitri said:

40 Close to my husband as I am, this place is not far or remote to me and my mind can run even faster than this; therefore, as you proceed, those words which I have already spoken, listen to them again from me

41 You are the mighty son of Vivasvan and that is why the learned call you Vaivasvat; to all the creatures you are fair and you uphold the dharma. For that reason you are, O Lord, also known as Dharmaraj.

42 More than himself does a man put his trust in the sage and so everyone gives more of his love in particular to him.

43 Only with a good heart can the living beings find trust in one another, and hence the sages are particularly trusted by everybody.

Yama said:

44 Never have I heard such holy utterances, O well-learned and bright Lady, in anyone speaking to me, ask for yet another boon, the fourth, pleased that I am, but not the life for the deceased, and from hither return to your place

Savitri said:

45. By our union, mine with Satyavan, let there be a hundred sons, noble and heroic in deed, well-born, extending the glory of the house: this is the fourth boon that I desire

Yama said:

46. You shall have, O Woman, a hundred sons, mighty and heroic, who shall gladden your heart; but, O Princess, you have come walking a long distance and therefore now return that you may not get tired on the way back.

Savitri said.

47. Holy people always abide in the dharma and never have they sorrow nor are they afflicted any time. Such a company or fellowship with the pious is never without rewards or fruits. In the fellowship of the saints all fear disappears

48. By the Truth the saints lead the sun; by askesis the saints uphold the earth; past, present and future find their refuge in the saints. Noble persons in the midst of the saints have never any grief.
49. The high and honourable know that for the eternal years what stays is the virtuous conduct; in that they strive for the supreme good of one another and do hurt to none
50. Benedictions of the persons established in the Truth go never unfulfilled; neither in them is the ill of selfishness nor is there the wounded sense of lost pride; and because such three qualities are ever present in the saints, they are hailed as the protectors of the world.

Yama said.

51. O devoted and chaste Lady, the more in well-adorned verses, full of great significance and agreeable to perception, you speak of the noble things conformable to the dharma, the more does my excellent devotion for you increase, therefore choose yet another but an appropriate boon from me

Savitri said

52. O Destroyer of Pride, this boon which you have granted me is of a different kind than the earlier ones and it cannot get fulfilled without proper matrimony; that is why again I ask you for the life of Satyavan without whom as a husband I am as good as dead
53. If I am to get such pleasure without my husband I shall abstain from it, even if heaven were offered to me I would not enter it without my husband, I am not anxious to possess wealth or fortune if it is without my husband; actually, I do not wish even to exist without my husband
54. You have given me the boon of a hundred sons and you yourself are taking my husband away; for that reason once more I ask the boon of life for Satyavan by which your words shall come true

Markandeya said:

55. Saying 'Let it be so' Dharmaraj Yama, the son of Vivasvan, released the noose from around his soul and, delighted, spoke this way to Savitri:
56. O gracious Lady, here I free your husband, O Daughter doing honour to the House; by your words intent in the merit of the dharma you have fully gladdened me. Take him now, of sound health and fit to return, to accomplish your desire which shall come true soon.

- 48 By the Truth the saints lead the sun; by askesis the saints uphold the earth; past, present and future find their refuge in the saints. Noble persons in the midst of the saints have never any grief
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57. He shall have a life of four hundred years to live with you; also, by performing the holy Yajnas of fire-sacrifice and by the conduct of the dharma, he shall be renowned in the world.
58. Satyavan will give you a hundred sons and they will be all heroic kings and will have themselves several sons and grandsons.
59. They will be all well-known forever by your name; then, your father too will beget a hundred sons from your mother.
60. Born as they will be by your mother Malawī, they will be recognised as the Malawas; in turn, your brothers will also have kingly sons and grandsons who will be all bright like the gods.
61. Blessing Savitri in this manner, the mighty Upholder of the Law sent her back and he himself returned to his abode.

(To be continued)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

O LIGHT

O LIGHT, do not pass by,
I have left my door ajar,
Let your lambence linger awhile
And your gentle beams
Sink into our twilight minds.
I can hear the distant bells on Goverdhan
And Brindavan lost to this world
Is felt in our swoon.

Far is Yamuna that in rapture turned blue,
Bathing His limbs who set its depths free.
A dream it is now
The laughter of the cerulean sky
That rang across its banks
When milkmaids lost in bliss
Played games with the moonlight of their Friend.

Where is the Kadamba that burst into bloom
When the tunes of His flute broke through the night?
Where the fragrance which in stealth pervades this world?

How envious swells forth my soul
Of the dust that grew very heaven!
My lips are athirst to kiss this sacred soil
That bears the footprints of my Master,
Cherishes His silent form
And frames His sun-kindling splendour
For the earth to grow ever vernal.

Come forth, O Mother Kali, unseen in our deeps,
Cleanse our nature of its mire.
Our mortal strength cannot hope to win Him.

DAMODAR REDDY

AND SO THIS HAPPENS

‘From this materialistic philosophy have resulted certain theories very dangerous to the moral future of mankind ’

— Sri Aurobindo, *Man—Slave or Free*, p 4

‘It has not been found in experience, whatever might have been hoped, that education and intellectual training by itself can change man; it only provides the human individuals and collective ego with better information and a more efficient machinery, for its self-affirmation, but leaves it the same unchanged human ego ’

— Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol II, Ch 28, p 937

“THOU too, Neelesh!” was the title of a short story published in the Sunday magazine section of a renowned daily of Calcutta sometime in the late 'sixties. It created a tremendous sensation because the author was an eminent short-story writer, very popular to his readers who were mostly college-students. Naturally it drew the attention of the people connected with education. It was during this time that one day a veteran professor of Philosophy who was also well connected with the daily by his erudite contributions from time to time, received a letter from the editor (magazine section) of the daily requesting him to fix the date and time of appointment when he could meet the professor to discuss certain issues raised by the story. The professor gladly consented and invited the editor

This was the first meeting of the editor with the professor in his residence. The atmosphere was very homey.

The editor explained the purpose of his interview and enquired whether the professor had gone through the story.

‘I congratulate the author,’ said the professor, ‘for his bold exposure. To me it seems that he has fully discharged his responsibility to society. Now is your turn because you have published the story, and thereby supported it.’

‘Yes, now we have to play our part,’ the editor replied, ‘that is why, as I have explained, I have come to you. Perhaps you are aware that the story stirred not only the minds of the students but also the intelligentsia of the society. We have been receiving letters almost every day since its publication from persons in various walks of life. We feel proud of the story-writer for his sharp and undaunted pen.’

Then recalling the theme of the story the editor stated, ‘The story is not fiction but a true image of the present distressed society. Neelesh is a live character. You may have seen him in our columns. From the story we come to know that he was a brilliant student of whom his teachers were very proud. He added glory to the institution. During his studies in the university he was misled by his colleagues and their political elders. Finally he became a smuggler and a

wagon-breaker. It was so shocking to one of his college-teachers who loved him from the core of his heart that he could not but find him out and meet him personally in a slum. At the first sight no other words came through his lips than that painful semi-Shakespearean exclamation—‘Thou too, Neelesh!’ And there the story ended.

‘Well-chosen exclamation, very significant and pinpointing,’ commented the professor ‘The fact that it is not only Neelesh but also many of his colleagues in the society who have taken up much illicit and degenerate occupation is there implicit in those very words of exclamation And that is the purport of the story,—unstated but not incomprehensible Here lies its excellence I’m confident, that there is no exaggeration. As for myself I can comment that I have heard a very good-natured student of my college, with poetical feelings, a wee bit self-oblivious, uttering slang towards his subordinates, taking bribes at random because he is now a police officer. I have seen a well-disciplined N.C.C. captain becoming a political hooligan. In a dastardly way they kill their opponents who may have been their friends a few months back.’

‘Yes, sir! this is the fact. Now the situation has become more dark, perhaps reached utter darkness. But why? Why is this at all happening? If brilliant students choose this sanguinary path for their progress and lead the society through it then how shall the nation rise? Who is responsible for this self-annulment of students—the growing citizens? Who is responsible for this degeneration, this break-down of social standards? It may be that this heart-rending situation is a temporary phase and there is nothing deplorable. Nonetheless we cannot remain silent spectators nor are we supposed to passively support this delusion.’

‘Then what is your plan?’ asked the professor. ‘Do you intend to get the malady totally uprooted from the society? But how?’

‘First of all we will make an appraisal of the situation on the basis of views and comments from persons of different age-groups, occupations, and also, with special care, from the unemployed Then we’ll arrange a public debate on the issue to evolve our action-plan so that we may be able to uproot the fundamental elements that help bring about this predicament.’

‘Then you are to find out who is responsible,—the Individual, the Society or the State? Isn’t it so?’, questioned the professor.

‘Yes, sir! that is why I’m here. Your well-thought views on the issue will no doubt be very helpful in our venture.’

After thinking awhile the professor humbly stated, ‘I’m sorry I do not feel like offering my own views because I’m afraid that they may not serve the real purpose of your endeavour Since I’m a theorist I’m not confident how far my views will be vindicative of your action-plan. Besides, I’m not a visionary: I cannot see the future. We must prepare our plan in such a way that it can help bring a radical change in the society My suggestions may help you today, but

who knows how the same will act in future? On the contrary it may create a new and more difficult problem. So, let us contemplate on how Sri Aurobindo has dealt with problems that have engrossed humanity and impede its progress. Though we received these illuminating words from him nearly fifty years ago, yet they are so relevant today that they seem to us as if they were written a few years back.

'Here in the story you see that there were clashes between groups of students. You remarked that they were not fiction but reality. Sri Aurobindo had the vision of this phenomenon nearly 45 years before its actual happening on the surface.' Saying this the professor took a book of Sri Aurobindo (which was on the table) and started reading out the relevant passage.

"Man has created a system of civilisation which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilise and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites. All that is 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, a hustling medley of slogans and panaceas for which men are ready to oppress and be oppressed, to kill and be killed, to impose them somehow or other by the immense and too formidable means placed at his disposal, in the belief that this is his way out to something ideal."

'This is from the last chapter of Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*. You might have gone through it. This was what he envisaged during the First World War, and the situation started developing on the surface a few years after the Second, not only in India but all over the world.'

The editor remained silent with a vacant look as if he could not follow what the professor had meant to say.

'So far as I remember,' continued the professor, 'in one of his letters to a disciple Sri Aurobindo has pointed out how the problem develops. He has indicated that man's undeveloped inner life cannot keep pace with his over-developed outer life. This is so because he has neglected the necessity of developing his inner nature, rather he has ignored it, as a result he has become a slave of his passion. And this is the root cause of his present predicament.'

The editor was deeply absorbed, perhaps he was contemplating the points explained by the professor. All of a sudden he exclaimed,—'Oh, what a pity! None of us has judged the problem from this perspective!'

'"Slave of his passion"—are the keywords,' emphasised the professor. 'Here lies the clue to your action-plan, for if you admit the analysis you cannot

hold any outer machinery—social, political, educational, even religious,—responsible for this situation. The root cause of what is happening all over the world lies within ourselves. For all of us including the Neelesh of the story have willy-nilly become slaves of passion. It is we who are responsible, and it is we who are to be awakened, so that animal-man as we are now may become real Man.'

'Then are we to wait for so many years?'—with a sigh asked the editor. 'For who knows when we'll be able to become real Man. We feel like adopting some preventive measure here and now.'

The professor smiled and said, 'I know we are all after this,—to take immediate action. This is because we cannot see things in their totality; we have no patience to go deep into the problem. However, let me explain the nature of the problem; then we will decide how to solve it.'

'I'm sorry for my interruption. Please continue,'—the editor said apologetically.

Again the professor smiled and continued, 'We all know that we have made astounding progress in science and technology, and with their help we have been exploring the earth and space. And thus we have made gigantic developments in our outer life. We have no idea that without an inner change it is utterly impossible for us to cope with the developed activity in the outer world. All that we have created and are still creating under the drive of the vital-ego is an organisation so huge and mechanical that our life-instinct has but little competence to operate it. We do not feel the necessity of expanding and developing our inner nature. Thus on the one hand we remain careless and neglectful of our inner life and on the other we go on enormously enriching our outer life. The root cause of our predicament lies in this disparity.'

The professor paused for a while, watching the editor, and then continued:

'Just now you have admitted that none of you judged the problem from this perspective. Isn't it so?—This shows how ignorant we are of our own selves. If we fail to widen and heighten our consciousness then we will be surely led to a dangerous destiny.'

'Then are we supposed to discourage the scientists? It is a fact and you have admitted it that Science has achieved marvellous results and enriched our physical existence unimaginably,' remarked the editor.

'Yes, admirable indeed is the contribution of Science to our material progress. But it can by no means make our life sublime. Here we may recall Sri Aurobindo, "Our science itself is a construction, a mass of formulas and devices; masterful in knowledge of processes and in the creation of apt machinery, but ignorant of the foundation of our being and of world being, it cannot perfect our nature and therefore cannot perfect our life."²²

The editor felt enthused and commented, 'People would have to be made aware of these facts.'

'Surely, and that is your business, I mean those revolutionaries who have

taken up the pen instead of the rifle; and also those who like ourselves are in the educational profession. Perhaps you know that Sri Aurobindo started his life as a teacher and thereafter was a revolutionary journalist, and later when he became a Yogi and realised all the truths of existence he at once made the people aware of them, through the pages of the *Arya* during 1914-21. All that I have been just trying to explain is on the basis of what he has stated in *The Life Divine*. Thus I try to discharge my responsibility as an educator. However, let me explain the enigma so that the task which you have undertaken may be easier to accomplish.'

The editor looked very bright.

'Every day through different media we are made aware of the rapid and marvellous progress of spatial science and feel proud of our age. Don't we? Now, listen to what Sri Aurobindo has commented in 1915 when many of the present-day nuclear scientists were not born. Those who have been on earth at that time like Mr. Rutherford and Frederick Soddy were seen deeply absorbed in their research on the atom and the release of its energy. Sri Aurobindo has stated, "In modern times, as physical Science enlarged its discoveries and released the secret material forces of Nature into an action governed by human knowledge for human use, occultism receded and was finally set aside on the ground that the physical alone is real and mind and life are only departmental activities of matter. On this basis, believing material Energy to be the key of all things, Science has attempted to move towards a control of mind and life processes by a knowledge of the material instrumentation and process of our normal and abnormal mind and life functionings and activities; the spiritual is ignored as only one form of mentality. It may be observed in passing that if this endeavour succeeded, it might not be without danger for the existence of the human race, even as now are certain other scientific discoveries misused or clumsily used by a humanity mentally and morally unready for the handling of powers so great and perilous....'"⁷³

'So you see, my dear friend,' the professor said with the voice of a critic, 'that the fact was placed before the intelligentsia of human societies in India and abroad long ago. But how many of them have taken serious note of it? Perhaps none. Here is another instance which explains the human side of the issue, that is to say whether the discoveries are essential and needful for human progress. This is also from *The Life Divine*

"The utmost widening of a physical objective knowledge, even if it embrace the most distant solar systems and the deepest layers of the earth and sea and the most subtle powers of the material substance and energy, is not the essential gain for us, not the one thing which it is most needful for us to acquire. That is why the gospel of materialism, in spite of the dazzling triumphs of physical Science, proves itself always in the end a vain and helpless creed, and that too is why physical Science itself with all its achievements, though it may accomplish comfort, can never achieve happiness and fullness of being for the human race."⁷⁴

The editor was dumbfounded. A hush fell upon the scene. After a while the editor glanced at his watch and gave a helpless look. The professor could understand that the editor was anxious to find some ready-made line of action. Still he remained silent. He wanted the editor to express clearly what he expected of him.

'Excuse me, sir,' hesitatingly said the editor, 'we understand that the problem is so deep-rooted that we cannot get rid of it overnight. We have to undertake a long-term programme, but at the same time we must take some effective action so that people may realise that we are not sleeping and our posterity not accuse us of inaction.'

'So, what do you want me to do?' asked the professor

'We want to record the entire gamut of your analytical views on the problem so that we may get it published serially in our daily. We realise the depth and breadth of your approach and its great necessity, but I'm not sure whether they suit our pre-planned line of action. For it seems to me that words like 'inner-life' and 'inner-nature' are generally not in use in our day-to-day discussions on socio-political problems. Their true significance, I'm afraid, may not be realised by the student community nor by the social thinkers and politicians. Yet we feel the necessity of its publicisation. We must get it done. I'm not in a hurry. We do not mind if it takes long. So, you are free to discuss as elaborately as you think it necessary. I'm ready with my recorder.'

(To be continued)

SAMAR BASU

REFERENCES

- 1 *Life Divine* (N Y , 1965), Chap 28, pp 933-34
- 2 *Ibid* , p 931
- 3 *Ibid* , Chap 24, pp 778-79
- 4 *Ibid* , Chap 19, p 650

QUANTUM AND THE ENORMOUS CHANGE

(Continued from the issue of March 1993)

The Immediate Post-Copernican Developments

COPERNICUS'S work, sometimes viewed as a turning point in the evolution of human consciousness, stands out importantly in the history of science. It is therefore understandable also that the work had to confront contemporary opposition. Copernicus was fully aware of this and took additional precautions to safeguard his book against possible angry reactions of the theological authority. And this did delay the coming of the revolution.

By writing the book in Latin proper he preempted some of these reactions, making it accessible only to the elite astronomers of the day—a small intellectual society. As a result, at first it created no stir outside this immediate circle where it was being considered just another of those fanciful notions. This group of elites, while they were all skeptical about the central thesis of *De Revolutionibus*, nevertheless recognized its highly professional and thorough approach, for them it was the first astronomical text in entire Europe that could rival the *Almagest*. In spite of the fact that their faith in the stability of the earth remained unshaken, they borrowed from it diagrams, quoted its important features like the distance of the earth from the moon, made use of some lengthy tables, and found one mathematical technique or another as indispensable for their work. Although for a long time the conception of a moving earth remained part of an extremely small minority, it is clear that the *De Revolutionibus* had captured the minds of the people at some level or other; thus it was here to stay.

Criticism of this work had steadily grown, starting with astronomers themselves, and moving to poets, writers, and so on, they vehemently condemned heliocentrism and its followers. And by the time clerical opposition to heliocentrism developed, the damage done was sufficiently far beyond the point of repair when the suppression of *De Revolutionibus* would have had little effect. Kuhn explains “the vigor and venom displayed at the height of the Copernican controversy” as follows.

“When it was taken seriously, Copernicus's proposal raised many gigantic problems for the believing Christian. If, for example, the earth were merely one of six planets, how were the stories of the Fall and the Salvation, with their immense bearing on Christian life, to be preserved?.. If the earth is a planet and therefore located away from the center of the universe, what becomes of man's intermediate position between the devils and the angels? . Worst of all, if the universe is infinite, as many of the later Copernicans thought, where can God's

Throne be located? In an infinite universe, how is man to find God or God man?"

These questions clearly indicate that "the drama of Christian life and the morality that had been made dependent on it would not readily adapt to a universe where the earth was just one of a number of planets. Cosmology, morality and theology had long been interwoven in the traditional fabric of Christian thought." If we should step back for a moment we would perceive that "more than a picture of the universe and more than a few lines of scripture were at stake" *De Revolutionibus* was set to destroy an entire fabric of thought. It is in view of this conflict and the final overthrow of theological authority, that we shall study Brahe and Bruno here and Kepler in the following section.

Tycho Brahe

Tycho Brahe, born on the 14th of December 1546, in Denmark, was the eminent astronomical authority of Europe after the death of Copernicus. It is generally considered that Brahe contributed to astronomy only in terms of lengthy tables of observational data; but it is not so. True, it was in technical proficiency that he excelled, but his contributions to conceptual developments of astronomy too are significant.

Brahe, it should be recognised, was principally responsible for the immense improvements in techniques of astronomical observation. Applying the ingenuity of his mind he designed and built vastly sophisticated and better calibrated instruments to observe the motions of planets and stars. With great care and patience he scrutinised the heavens and collected highly reliable and accurate details. Such was the level of proficiency attained that with respect to modern telescopic observations his data for the stars are consistently accurate to 1' of an arc and for the planetary positions to about 4' of an arc. Indeed, this is an amazing achievement which makes him even today the greatest naked-eye observer of the skies.

Tycho Brahe's observational work had immense impact on the astronomical community. Among the first and immediate effects of such a work was the elimination of a whole series of problems that had been cluttered up due to the collection of poor data. At the same time, it brought the imperfections of the Copernican system into sharp focus and clearly indicated that the problem of the planets was yet far from solved. In an attempt to find a solution to this problem Brahe developed a new planetary theory. His rather traditional frame of mind could not accept the earth's motion; on the other hand, the professional in him could neither ignore the mathematical harmonies of the *De Revolutionibus*. He resolved this conflict by placing the Earth again at the centre of the universe with the sun and moon moving in circular orbits; the rest of the planets orbited the sun in circles. This Tychonic proposal was no doubt a wonderful compromise

solution bringing together the Ptolemaic and the Copernican systems; further “it retained the mathematical advantages of the Copernican system without violating the theological sentiments”. But his own data revealed imperfections and the elimination of them was done by Kepler.

But what is of more importance in our study here is that it was not only an emotional basis that drove Brahe to formulate this new model. In Copernicus’s model we find that there exists an immense unoccupied space between the sphere of the stars and that of Saturn. Even with the help of his new instruments and detailed observations, Brahe could not find anything of the sort and thus was forced to reject such an idea. Considerations in building new models had to take into account these factors and Brahe’s was one such.

There exists another important instance in Brahe’s life that really jolted the foundations of theological dogma. This was the observation of a “new star”. In the year 1572 all of Europe witnessed its spectacular appearance in the sky, what we now call an exploding Supernova. This object became as bright as Venus and then gradually faded away. It had remained in the sky for a total of 18 months, a period sufficiently long for Brahe to have concluded that this new object was not a comet and that it had appeared in the sphere of the stars. From the scriptural point of view this conclusion was indeed very shocking. Not only the immutable heavens but also the “basic contrast between the superlunary region and the corruptible earth” was now getting questioned. It did not stop only with this incident: by observing the motion of the comets, on at least six occasions, Brahe provided additional evidence in favour of the superlunary change.

In conclusion we may note two things. One: Brahe’s discoveries were destined to bring in a cosmological upheaval. Two: his invention of refined observational instruments and collection of highly accurate information were now available, even for skeptics to check ideas and theories. It was these that sped the downfall of scriptural authority and that helped to usher in the new climate of scientific approach.

Giordano Bruno

Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) was an Italian mystic and was greatly instrumental in accelerating the downfall of theological authority. He possessed an intellect of the highest order, and had in the earlier days of his rather short life studied theology and arts. A rebellious nature marked the strength of his personality, with raging whirlwinds of ideas finding an expression in his writings and poems. His works covered a variety of topics ranging from theology, religion and sociology to philosophy, science and cosmology. In all these we find him criticising either contemporary society with its mind imbedded in dogmatic ideas or the philosophers stuck with the love of the ancients, particularly Aristotle’s physics

This kind of intense intellectual activity repeatedly brought him into collision with the “men [who] had chosen to think that religion was bound up with certain fixed intellectual conceptions about God and the world which could not stand scrutiny,” these men believed that “scrutiny had to be put down by fire and sword” It was from such authority bound in this rigidity that Bruno had to flee from country to country, he hoped that he would find a suitable environment enabling him to express his philosophic, scientific or religious views with respectful freedom. But nowhere did he have it

He fled from Italy to Switzerland, from Switzerland to France, and from France to England. It was here that he propounded his vision of an infinite universe, departing from the Copernican theory he went on to suggest that in infinite space there exists no centre and a solar system can be placed anywhere in it. Not only that, he proceeded a step further and said that the sun was merely one of the many stars in the infinite expanse populated with planets. Such an idea surely shook the conventionalists to the very bottom for “not only the earth but the sun and the entire solar system were transformed to insignificant specks lost in the infinitude of God’s creation”. It is clear that the departure from the traditional Ptolemyism had reached its maximum.

Once again Bruno had to run away. From England he came back to the Continent. The journeys to save his own life continued until 1592 when he was tricked by a patron in Italy who denounced him to the Inquisition. The following year he was transported to Rome where he was tried for heresy. After seven long years in captivity he was, to the great relief of the Christian authorities, burnt at the stake in 1600.

Atrocities committed by the Church in the name of religion had reached a new peak and the pernicious war of theology against science was certainly hotting up This was a time when “Churches and creeds... stood violently in the way of philosophy and science, burned a Bruno, imprisoned a Galileo, and so generally misconducted themselves in this matter that philosophy and science had in self-defence to turn upon Religion and rend it to pieces in order to get a free field for their legitimate development.” And Bruno’s life seems to be a consecration towards that if we see it in the light of Sri Aurobindo.

The afflictions that Bruno suffered can be very appropriately characterised by one line from Shelley’s *Ode to the West Wind*: “I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!” Nay, much more than that—he was reduced to ashes

The agony experienced by Shelley is poignant, perhaps indicative of the fact that he was some stranger to the world of misery and suffering. We mortals are so much used to the wounds of life that we do not talk of falling on thorns and bleeding. But Shelley, we may aver with Sri Aurobindo, “was not only a poet from other worlds; he was passionately interested in bringing the light, beauty and truth of the ideal super-world from which he came into the earth-life”. Shelley’s coming from some other world is made more explicit by Sri Aurobindo

in another letter of his written to K.D. Sethna. "I imagine Shelley was not an evolutionary being but a being of a higher plane assisting in the evolution." Giordano Bruno's self-exiles from country to country, his interminable sufferings for the ideals he stood for, and finally his paying the price with his life make us wonder whether he too was some such alien who might have come here with a similar purpose. Sri Aurobindo has the following to say about him: "The outward rewards and the sufferings of life are small things to the higher soul of knowledge in man: even his high mind of knowledge will often face all that the world can do to afflict it, just as it is ready to make all manner of sacrifice in the pursuit and the affirmation of the truth it knows and lives for. Bruno burning in the Roman fire, the martyrs of all religions suffering and welcoming as witnesses to the light within them torture and persecution.. are witnesses to this imperative of knowledge, its extreme examples and exponents." We witness during this period a puzzling mixture of the spirit of Renaissance and a religious dogmatism obscurely militant in its ways. This period was indeed marked by happiness as seen in the creation of new life-breathing arts and literature, and the risky times in the challenging adventures of the unknown; it may thus be suggested that these great beings came here to help another cycle of evolution start. Bruno must have belonged to that, as did Galileo, another majestic Italian. Their suffering here and their positive contributions may themselves be enough proof for us to recognise that. Let us, however, look into the contributions of Kepler before we launch on the Inquisition.

(To be continued)

VIKAS DHANDHANIA



SHAKESPEARE IN THE LIGHT OF SANSKRIT POETICS

(Continued from the issue of March 1993)

Othello

It has been thought feasible to take up *Othello* as the first play to be studied. It exhibits certain peculiarities which I hope to analyse in the ensuing discussion. In all the lists of rasas given by scholars from Bharata downwards, *śrngāra* is always the first to be mentioned, and as will be seen *śrngāra* (the erotic) is the *angī* (main) rasa of this play. *Śrngāra* and *vīra* (the heroic) are the two rasas that are thought to be specially appropriate to plays¹ and in *Othello* we find both of these. It is true that *śrngāra* exists in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, but in the former the hero leans towards the *dhīralalita* type and the latter comes chronologically later than *Othello*. The most important of the *nāyakas* or heroes is *dhīrodātta* and I shall try to show that *Othello* displays many of the characteristics of such a protagonist.

There is, however, one obstacle to be overcome before an analysis can be attempted. Sanskrit dramatic theory does not have a very sympathetic attitude towards tragedy and consequently we find a dearth of tragedies in the history of Sanskrit drama. Indeed, except for Bhavabhūti who declared that *karuna* (the pathetic) is the one and only rasa, there is hardly anyone else who essayed the medium of tragedy. Indian philosophy takes it as a first premise that the aim of all art, of life itself, is the attainment of the fourfold goal—*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. Tragedy posits failure and as such it goes against the very ethos of our religion. However, so far as the question of the audience's identification (*tadātmya*) with the hero goes, the validity of *karuna* could have been a distinct possibility in the world of drama. It is the capacity of the poet to help the reader or the spectator establish identification with the *āśraya* (recipient) that leads to universalization. Identification is the catalytic agent that leads to *rasa*-experience. In the case of *karuna* rasa, identification is eminently possible and, as such, tragedy could have been taken as a viable and successful form of drama. But this did not happen, though the potentialities of *karuna* have been explored again and again. *Śakuntalam* is one such play. Keeping this in mind, it can be concluded that the establishing of identification (which leads to universalization) is fully possible in tragedy. It will be neither unscholarly nor presumptuous to apply the *rasavāda* to the appreciation of a Jacobean tragedy.

The concept of *angī* rasa can be found in Bharata, and Ānandavardhana analysed the phenomenon in detail. After much argument scholars have arrived at certain conclusions. It is now agreed that the rasa that permeates a work to the greatest extent is its *angī* rasa. In addition to this requirement there are certain other features. The character of the protagonist should be steeped in and reflect

the *angī* rasa The action that animates the play, as well as the emotion that drives the protagonist, propagates the *angī* The third characteristic is that the rasa that dominates the over-all impact of a work is the *angī* of that work. In the case of a tragedy like *Othello* the question rises at once. since the final effect is steeped in *karuna*, should that be the *angī*? Here the discerning reader might point out that since it is love that governs and impels Othello, leading to the ultimate tragedy, it should, therefore, be given the pride of place

Before we try to establish *śrngāra* as the *angī* rasa of *Othello* we should try to understand its nature. This rasa, with love or *rati* as its *sthāyī* (permanent) emotion, is so all-pervasive in Sanskrit poetry that its importance cannot be over-emphasized. A whole school of scholars have written eloquently on it. Many have called it "soft names in many a musèd rhyme" as can be seen when the Vaisnava scholar—saint Rūpa Goswamīn calls it the *ujjala* or *madhura* rasa Love or *rati* is one of the fundamental impulses of human nature, and this forms the basis. It is generally accepted that there are two kinds of *śrngāra*—*sambhoga* and *vipralambha*. Dhananjaya alters this classification a little and gives us three: *ayoga*, *viprayoga* and *sambhoga* ² *Ayoga* occurs when the hero and the heroine are in love without having met each other *Viprayoga* occurs when the lovers have been separated from each other Much hair-splitting has been done on these two kinds by ingenious scholars. In comparison, *sambhoga śrngāra* seems to have been singularly uninspiring. It signifies the union of the lovers Out of twenty-three slokas devoted to this rasa, Dhananjaya gives only three to *sambhoga*.³

When we look at the play *Othello*, it can be easily seen that throughout the play love is the one emotion that dominates over all the others. All the characters except Iago are impelled by love in one form or another. Roderigo loves Desdemona This infatuated fool follows the married couple to Cyprus in the hope that Desdemona might tire of Othello and turn to him. Cassio's dalliance with Bianca urges the play towards its tragic end. As for Othello, his love for Desdemona is the very reason for his existence:

Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul
But I do love thee! and when I love thee not
Chaos is come again ⁴

It is when his belief in this love is shaken that chaos does come upon him—a man who "Loved not wisely but too well".

Desdemona's love for Othello is such that it impelled her to leave her father's home and secretly marry him. It is a selfless, all-forgiving love She asks Emilia to commend her to her kind lord even while she is dying, strangled.⁵ This deep and enduring love does not express itself through attractive outward demonstration as Othello's magnificent eloquence does. Because of this differ-

ence, Desdemona's love would, according to Viśvanātha, be the type known as *nīti śrngāra*.⁶

Without going into further details it can be seen that if there is any one *rasa* that dominates the play it is *śrngāra*. There are many other *rasas* in the play—all subservient to it. As we study the action of *Othello*, the kaleidoscopic play of different *rasas* will be seen to enhance our enjoyment of it—climbing towards tragic equilibrium at the end.

The theme of the play determines, in Sanskrit poetics, the nature of the play. Thus Dhananjaya tells us that the hero of a play (*nāṭaka*) should be *dhīrodāta* by nature, of high lineage and that if in the story there are incidents that go against the hero's nature or the *rasa* of the play then these should be either omitted or modified.⁷ When Shakespeare adapted Cinthio's story, he transfigured it so that *Othello* gained tragic dignity. The play, therefore, can with propriety be called a *nāṭaka* and studied as such. This is being pointed out as there are eleven kinds of plays as listed by Bharata as well as Dhananjaya. We can see how from the very beginning different *rasas* gain prominence in different parts of the play, while the all-pervading *śrngāra* *rasa* runs sometimes as a smooth undercurrent and sometimes overwhelms the reader like "the enshafed flood". In the opening scene, for a long time we have the play of different emotions and it will be a mistake to assert that any of these emotions can attain the state of *rasahood*

If, along with Kavirāja Viśvanātha we take *vātsalya* to be a *rasa*⁸ then in Brabantio's reaction to the discovery of Desdemona's elopement we have an instance of it. The scene has been building up to the evocation of this *rasa* from quite a few passages beforehand. We realise that Desdemona, the only daughter of an old man, has left him to marry "a lascivious Moor". Brabantio, though annoyed at being disturbed in his sleep, becomes apprehensive and when finally he finds that Roderigo's information is true, he breaks out into loud lamentations:

And what's to become of my despised time
Is nought but bitterness... O unhappy girl...⁹

Here definitely *vātsalya* *rasa* with parental love as its *sthāyī* (permanent) emotion attains the high state of *rasa*-experience. Here Brabantio is the *āśraya* (recipient), Desdemona though absent is the *ālambana* (the fundamental determinant) and the time, i.e. midnight, and the information given by Iago and Roderigo are the *uddīpana* (the excitant). Brabantio's grief, lamentations, despair, feeling of betrayal are the *anubhāvas* (the consequent). He is the universal old man who has lost his only daughter to (according to him) an unworthy man. The reader or spectator establishes identification (*tādātmya*) with him and experiences, not Brabantio's emotions, nor his own hypothetical

emotion at the supposed loss of his daughter, but the *rasa* of grieving parental love, universalized beyond the limitations of space and time. The art of the poet transmutes a father's grief and then the wonderful happens—the reader is aware of a sudden heightening of effect, an inexplicable intensity of experience; in other words, we have the bliss of *rasa*-experience.

The next high point of *rasa*-evocation comes during Othello's speech beginning "Her father loved me". In the scene preceding this we have the interplay of different emotions (*bhāvas*) The conversation with Cassio, the brief interlude with Brabantio and the first part of scene iii devoted to the Duke and the senators, all serve the function of *prakarī* which Dhanika describes as that part of the action which continues along with the main action for a short time.¹⁰ Brabantio's speech complaining of his daughter's seduction serves as *bindu*, i.e., the link that connects us with the main action.¹¹ Othello's speech gives the rich taste of several *rasas*, the foremost being *śrngāra*. Towards the beginning *śrngāra* runs as an undercurrent and it is *adbhūta* (the marvellous) that predominates, associated with *karuna* (the pathetic). The story of Othello's adventures is what Desdemona herself said of it.

It was strange, it was passing strange,
It was pitiful, it was wondrous pitiful.¹²

Othello creates "the antres vast and deserts idle" for his hearers, on the stage and outside it, and for a few minutes holds us spellbound. His tale here would be the *uddipana* (excitant), Desdemona the *āśraya* (recipient) and Othello himself the *ālabana* (fundamental determinant). The reader enjoys the unmixed bliss of *adbhūta* *rasa*. *Śrngāra* starts asserting itself when he tells us of Desdemona's reactions, and finally emerges triumphant:

"And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her,
I should but teach him how to tell my story,
And that would woo her Upon this hint I spake:
She loved me for the dangers I had passed,
And I loved her that she did pity them."¹³

Here we find love presented in a restrained manner, a calm enduring love that does not display itself through outward gestures. A love, in other words, that Viśvanātha would call *nīti śrngāra*.¹⁴ After an intermission of a few passages *śrngāra* once more flames into being in Desdemona's speech when she pleads to be allowed to stay with Othello.

We have again a scene between Iago and Roderigo which is in the nature of *prakarī*. It is true that we have several appearances of Roderigo but the scenes or episodes covering him cannot be given the status of *patākā*. Dhananjaya makes it

quite clear that only those episodes that are connected with the main action and run alongside it can be called *patākā*.¹⁵ The episodes connected with Cassio, therefore, can truly be called *patākā*, not those concerning Roderigo. The scenes figuring this foolish youth often give rise to laughter though the element of humour is not pure or intense enough to be described as *hāsya rasa*.

(To be continued)

RATRI RAY

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A REQUEST

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SHYAM KUMARI

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of March 1993)

SRI AUROBINDO appeared in Bengal in 1906 as a God-ordained leader of men and very soon won for himself his right place in the national movement. During this period the Boycott-Swadeshi Movement galvanised in no time national sentiments into vigorous channels. When it once started, it spread along the entire front of the national life. It expressed itself no less in the national educational field than in the political or economical. Sri Aurobindo took a major role in the national movement of education. He realised that education is the main battlefield for the National Movement. The New Movement's thought aimed at educational emancipation and complete Swaraj in the economical field. The two are really complementary to each other. The leaders of the National Movement considered that "Education and Economics are the twin effective watchwords" of their struggle for freedom.

Sri Aurobindo pointed out that the prevalent British system of Education in India was an absurd copy and even a vulgarisation of the British model, and we were circumstanced to barter away our ancient heritage. The prominent leader of Congress, Mr. Gokhale, expressed the ignorant view that the movement had a feeble hope for success. Defying his opinion Sri Aurobindo delivered on January 15, 1908 at Girgaum, Bombay, a stirring message: "Some of these people appear to think that there can be no 'national' education for India, where, according to them, the existence of various conflicting creeds and races makes the growth of a feeling of nationality an impossibility. This view is utterly wrong. The very geographical position of the country, isolating it from other parts of the world, argues its separate national existence. Italy, which is isolated like India, achieved national independence within a space of thirty years. Shivaji, Akbar, Ashoka, as well as the Rishis of old are amongst the component parts of the Indian nation. Let us learn from Japan how to awaken the national spirit among the people by a contemplation of the heroic deeds of our ancestors. Let us bear in mind that we have a debt to discharge not only towards our ancestors but also to our posterity. If such a noble ideal is steadily kept before our mental vision, we shall see that our nation will give birth to great philosophers, statesmen and generals. This ideal has been kept in view in guiding the movement for national education in Bengal."

Professors Haridas and Uma Mukherjee described the course of the movement itself in great detail including the founding of the National Council of Education in their book *Origins of the National Educational Movement*. They said: "The National Council of Education that was organised in March, 1906 set up under it in Calcutta the Bengal National College and School (14 August, 1906), with Aurobindo Ghose as the first Principal and Satis Chandra Mukherjee

as the first executive head or the Superintendent. At the Calcutta session of the Congress held in December, 1906, Hirendra Nath Datta, one of the main builders of the National Council of Education, moved a resolution in favour of National Education which was officially accepted by the Congress as an integral point in its programme. The movement for National Education was not confined to Bengal alone, but was also in progress in other parts of India. In the growth and organisation of the National Education Movement nobody played a greater role than Satis Chandra Mukherjee of whom Aurobindo feelingly observed in course of his Bombay speech on the 19th January, 1908: 'I spoke to you the other day about National Education and I spoke of a man who had given his life to that work, the man who really organised the National College in Calcutta, and that man also is a disciple of a Sannyasin, that man also, though he lives in the world, lives like a Sannyasin.' ”

Mr. and Mrs. Mukherjee have scrutinised the background of the movement. "As early as 1893-94 Satischandra had become conscious of the serious deficiencies in the prevalent system of University education in our country. He expressed himself clearly through the pages of the *Dawn* during 1897-98. In an article on 'Principles of University Education in the East and the West,' he made the following observations: 'The ideal of University education under the old Hindu regime and the modern ideal of education seem to differ as poles asunder. The Hindu ideal looked to the intellectual development of the student as a means to an end, the end being the development of the higher, the spiritual nature of men. . . Education, therefore, was with the ancient Hindus, the perpetual regulation of conduct, and the intellectual growth of the student was part of an all-embracing scheme of education. Turning now to the principles of education as it obtains in the West, we may see that education is here also a means to an end, but the end in the case is greater worldly comfort, greater worldly prospects, acquisition of wealth and power. The training of the mind is no doubt an avowed object, but all mental discipline subordinates itself to the requirements of the age, the race for greater worldly enjoyment, greater worldly power. The Indian Universities are, if we may so express ourselves, copies of copies: for the English Universities themselves being bad copies themselves it is clear that the Universities here in India suffer from a double taint. (1) that of being bad imitations, and (2) that the original itself requires to be very far perfected before it will be able to assimilate the true functions of education.' ”

On the British system of education, " . . . the education imparted in Government schools where the tender minds of students are uselessly burdened with Western ideas utterly antagonistic to their own modes of living and thinking," Sri Aurobindo commented: "In profiting by our contact with Western civilisation, we should be careful not to cut ourselves adrift from our original moorings, but should at the same time imitate the Japanese in taking the fullest advantage of modern scientific discoveries." ”

The University Act passed by Lord Curzon created great havoc in the

country. Mr. and Mrs. Mukherjee, after much painstaking research, said: "When in June, 1902, the Report of Indian Universities' Commission together with the 'Note of Dissent' by Gooroodas [Banerjee] was published, it drew at once hostile reactions from the leaders of education. There started a regular campaign of criticism of the report and recommendations of the Universities' Commission both in the Indian Press and on the platform."⁵

They further commented: "The Indian Universities Act passed by Lord Curzon was received 'with a violent outburst of indignation' not only by Indian leaders and politicians, but also by some European thinkers of great repute. In an article published in the *Dawn and the Dawn Society's* Magazine (January, 1906 part II), Mrs Annie Besant observed that 'the educated Indians ought to take the question of education into their own hands. This has been essentially necessary in consequence of the late University Act' which was likely to render higher education very very costly and thus excluding from it 'the very class that demands it most urgently and to shut the doors of the University to many brilliant students in India who would do their country very good services.'"⁶

Sri Aurobindo on 8 May wrote in the *Bande Mataram*: "At last the *Brahmāstra* which Lord Curzon forged for the stifling of patriotism through the instrumentality of the University, is to be utilised, and utilised to its full capacity"⁷

Mr. & Mrs Mukherjee reported: "The swift course of the movement, although described by Curzon as 'manufactured', had 'taken the British nation by surprise,' as Sir Alfred Lyall frankly confessed in his introduction to Chiról's work *On Indian Unrest* (London, 1910, p VIII) The entire student community of Bengal was quite naturally caught in its grip in those stirring times. The Calcutta students took the solemn vow of Boycott and Swadeshi at several meetings towards the end of July, 1905 and the *mofussil* students did not lag much behind. The students' active participation in the national upsurge led in quick stages to the broadening and deepening of the Boycott-Swadeshi Movement. It was the students who carried from door to door the messages of Boycott and Swadeshi in the villages and towns of Bengal"⁸

"The Government took alarm at this disquieting development and felt impelled to crush the student agitation and thereby to undermine the vital force of the general movement. Consequently, a confidential Circular No. 1679 P.D. dated, Darjeeling, the 10th October, 1905 was issued to the Magistrates and Collectors by Mr. R W Carlyle, Officiating Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, interdicting students' participation in political meetings, particularly Boycott or Swadeshi meetings or picketings, and providing rigorous penal measures of discipline"⁹

Sri Aurobindo remarked on 28 May 1907: "Everyone will remember the convulsion created by the Carlyle Circular. Its natural effect would have been to bring about an universal students' strike, and for a few days it seemed as if such a strike would actually take place. Unfortunately the movement immediately

affected certain vested interests and the representatives of those interests happened also to be the political leaders to whom the country and the students especially were accustomed to look for guidance”¹⁰

The infamous Risley Circular was promulgated by the Government on 6 May 1908. Sri Aurobindo wrote on 8 May 1908: “The Circular letter issued to the local Governments ‘with the object of protecting Higher Education in India’ from any connection with politics, is an awkward and clumsily worded document such as we would not have expected from the pen of Sir H. Risley, but it manages to make its object and methods pretty clear. The object is to put a stop to the system of National Volunteers which is growing up throughout Bengal, to use the Universities as an instrument for stifling the growth of political life and incidentally to prevent men of ability and influence in the educational line from becoming a political power.”¹¹

Sri Aurobindo further commented: “The Risley Circular is a desperate attempt of the bureaucracy not only to recover and confirm its hold on the student population and through them on the future, but to make that hold far more stringent, rigid, ineffugable than it ever was in the past.”¹²

Sri Aurobindo pointed out about the Risley Circular: “This circular is only a more comprehensive and carefully studied edition of the Carlyle Circular. It brings therefore no unfamiliar element into the problem; but there is this very important difference, that while the Carlyle Circular was a local experiment hastily adopted to meet an urgent difficulty and dropped as soon as it was found difficult to work, the Risley Circular is a deliberate policy adopted by the Supreme Government, with full knowledge of the circumstances and of its possible effects, in the hope of striking at the very root of the Swadeshi movement”¹³

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

Was Jesus in India?

SRI AUROBINDO has called him an Avatar, an incarnation of Love, and there is a long passage in *Savitri* which obviously refers to Christ, though not exclusively so.¹ The knowledge about his life is scanty, the sources are not very reliable and second-hand. So there is much scope for legends to form. Was Jesus really in India, either in his youth—during that long period of his life about which we don't have any knowledge at all—or after his crucifixion which he possibly survived?

Dozens of books have been published on this issue, and articles have appeared in journals and newspapers such as the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, or the German *Stern* and *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, all of them publications with a very large circulation. I read a standard work on this subject, *Jesus lebte und starb in Kashmir* by A. Faber-Kaiser.² The Spanish-born author is an esoteric writer, not an expert either in theology, religion or Indology. The book presents an enthusiastic effort, but the author does not substantiate his numberless points through careful and serious documentation, although he is never short of supposedly important sources to quote.

This lack of expertise of the Jesus-in-India-proponents has been exposed by Gunter Gronbold in his study titled *Jesus in Indien—Das Ende einer Legende*.³ Gronbold, who is in charge of the Oriental Department of the Bavarian State Library, is an Indologist and Tibetologist by education. With merciless ridicule he takes up the Jesus-in-India-theory (J.I.T.) and destroys it point by point. He particularly addresses a book by Holger Kersten, a theologian who claimed in his study to have made new contributions to the subject.⁴ It is not available any more, so I can only indirectly refer to it by relying on Gronbold's quotations. However, as he points out, all these books contain some information and argumentation which are essentially identical and primarily based on a report of the Russian writer Nikolaj Notovitch about his visit to India and Tibet, first published in 1894.

Notovitch writes that he suffered an accident in Tibet, broke his leg and was brought to the monastery of Hemis where the Head Lama showed him documents containing a brief biography of Jesus, including his stay in India. All

¹ Pp 445-6, Cent Ed

² Lausanne Edition Esteve 1986. The title of the English edition is *Jesus died in Kashmir* (London 1978). The book was originally published in Spanish.

³ Munchen Kosel Verlag 1985

⁴ *Jesus lebte in Indien* (Munchen 1980)

the J.I.T -authors make very much of Notovitch's story, but don't mention that famous Tibetologists and Indologists including Max Muller had exposed the whole story as false decades ago. The texts as quoted by Notovitch were too obviously his own phantasy and did not in any way resemble genuine Buddhist texts of ancient times. Subsequent enquiries at the monastery revealed that no Westerner had ever stayed there with a broken leg or had been shown a book with the above content. Furthermore, there are no texts "1500 years old" in Tibet (as Notovitch said), since the script was invented only in the 7th century A.D. Even the Russian's external description of the "book" supposedly shown to him displayed his entire ignorance of Tibetan literary culture. Gronbold is in a position to quote a host of famous scholars who call Notovitch "a cheat".

In the same way Gronbold also discusses "the argument from the Bhavishyapurana" to which the J.I.T -authors attach great importance, quoting a passage from it which—in their opinion—undoubtedly refers to Jesus. The discussion of this passage⁵ by those authors is very poor and superficial. None of them gives a correct translation along with the required textual criticism. It is well-known that Puranic texts were freely expanded and enlarged by all kinds of authors of all epochs. Kersten and Faber-Kaiser say the text was written in 115 A.D., which is not certain at all. The compilation of the BhvP in its present form was completed in the 19th century and according to the Indologist Helmut Hoffmann the passage in question should be from a period between the 3rd and 7th century A.D.

The text reports in verses 21/22 about a king of the Śakas meeting "a beautiful man... with a white body and white garments". "He asked him: 'Who are you?' And the man replied joyfully: 'I am Īsaputra, born from the body of a young woman [or virgin (*kumārī*)], proclaiming the teaching of the barbarians [*mlecchas*], whose essence is the vow of truthfulness." The J.I.T.-authors identify the king with Shalivahana⁶, but Gronbold points out that this identification is as uncertain as that of *Īsaputra* ["son of God"] with Jesus. A close scrutiny of the text and its correct translation suggests that many interpretations could be put into it. Thus white garments, for instance, could also refer to a member of the Shvetāmbara-Jaina-sect (*śvetāmbara* means "white-clothed"). To explain away the term *masīhatva* [Messiah-hood] in verse 26 is more difficult. Gronbold's discussion of the whole passage is actually not satisfying and it is evident that more research needs to be done on the manuscript (in Poona) and its content.

However, in many other instances the Indologist is able to demonstrate clearly that Kersten and the other authors mostly make unfounded and

⁵ BhvP III, 3, 2, 21-32

⁶ The reality and historicity of the name has been discussed by K.D. Sethna in *Ancient India in a New Light* (New Delhi, Aditya Prakashan 1989), pp. 517-20

unreliable statements on etymology, Sanskrit, etc This also applies to their identification of Yuz Asaf, a prophet buried in a tomb in Srinagar, as Jesus The name was actually derived from *bodhisattva* via Arab *Budhasaf* and *Yudasaf* Gronbold presents in great detail the history of this name in the context of that tomb and gives the actual equivalents of “Jesus” in more than a dozen Asian languages.

Even the Turin Shroud⁷ is quoted as evidence by the J.I.T. authors, since it supposedly shows that Jesus survived the crucifixion⁸ Gronbold is convinced that the Shroud is genuine, but he admits that it is entirely a matter of faith whether you believe Christ himself was wrapped in it or someone else He then quotes medical authorities as stating that the Shroud does *not* have any evidence that the man in it survived

More recently, the Carbon-14 tests of the Shroud are believed to have shown that it dates back approximately to the 14th century A.D But Holger Kersten along with Elmar Gruber has challenged these findings in a book titled *Das Jesus Komplott* [The Jesus Conspiracy].⁹ Actually, they seem to have a point. A reviewer in the conservative newspaper *Die Welt* (21-11-92) wrote, “most scientists knowing the Shroud are convinced of the questionable character of the carbon tests. Many of them speak quite openly of fraudulent manipulation.” Thus, Dr. Tite of the British Museum—one of the three Institutes that performed the tests—is said to have received one million pound sterling from unknown donors after publishing the results, with part of the amount being used for himself for a Chair in Oxford¹⁰ So, here too arguments go back and forth and there is no final proof, although we find plenty of mutual recriminations and supposed motives for veiling the truth of the matter

⁷ See K D Sethna’s article, titled *The Shroud of Turin and the Biblical Evidence*, in the issue of March ’89

⁸ The J I T authors assume that Jesus was given an anaesthetic potion by Essenian friends before his ordeal and got subsequently cured through some highly effective medication He went to India, after having appeared to his disciples in his real physical form, and lived on in Kashmir for many decades

It is a fact that victims on the cross did not die immediately The death generally came after a long time through exhaustion and exposure (See the article by surgeon W B Primrose in *Mother India*, issue No 3, 1965)

Primrose concludes that judged by the purely medical evidence it cannot be pronounced with absolute certainty that Jesus was actually dead when his body was taken from the cross

After having additionally considered the evidence from the Shroud (considered as genuine), he writes “In view of the foregoing, it is possible to suggest that Jesus may not have died on the cross, although he suffered the experience of dying ”

Faber-Kaiser says that victims who were taken from the cross after a few hours, generally survived and recovered As his source he cites Stroud, *On the Physical Cause of Death of Christ*, p 55

However, Gronbold believes that only a modern hospital with all its technical facilities could have helped those victims (p 89)

⁹ Munchen, Langen Muller Verlag 1992

¹⁰ According to *The Times* (25-3-1989)

Was Jesus in India, did he survive the crucifixion? Gronbold assures his readers that he was not there and that this chapter is closed. But his armour is not without weak spots. Many of his statements are by far not as certain and absolute as he tries to suggest. Most probably, the final word on *Jesus in India* has not yet been uttered.

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Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Seventy-second Seminar

26th April 1992

“WHAT IS THE RELEVANCE OF SRI AUROBINDO’S INTEGRAL
YOGA

AT PRESENT WHEN HUMANITY IS UNDERGOING AN
EVOLUTIONARY CRISIS?”

Speech by Arindam Das

THE current perplexities of the world have been a concern for many a thinker all round the globe. All seem to agree that humanity is passing through an extremely difficult stage where it is faced with problems that are beyond its grasp. Be it in politics, economics, religion or culture, man is finding himself increasingly cornered in strife and destruction. Some of the modern psychologists in their desperate attempt to understand human behaviour point at the “id” or the lower self of man that is responsible for the present crises, but because of their relatively shallow knowledge of human nature they can hardly come up with concrete and lasting remedies. Truly this scenario leads us to believe that there is something fundamentally wrong with the human civilisation that has led it to the present crisis. According to Sri Aurobindo’s deeper vision this crisis is an “evolutionary crisis”, which in its true nature is a crisis of consciousness.

As one talks about the crisis of consciousness and Sri Aurobindo’s contribution to finding its remedy, one must remember that it is not an entirely new idea, and that people for ages have not only been in some way aware of it and have endeavoured in their own way to find a suitable solution. The most notable among those who have identified the crisis correctly are the spiritual thinkers and mystics. However, even if these men have understood the nature of the crisis, their prescribed solution, even though well-founded, is rather exclusive and therefore so narrow that it cannot be really effective in life.

The spiritual men of the past rightly understood that all the worldly problems are due to man’s imperfect nature. Man is at the most a mental being who is subject to his lower nature with all its imperfections in the terrestrial life. According to them the only solution therefore is to have a complete liberation from the lower nature by cutting oneself off from the terrestrial life and merging into the one transcendent supra-cosmic Reality or the infinite static Self. This notion attempted to exclude the world, or the phenomenal nature, considering it to be the kingdom of evil and ignorance, and sought to create a permanent

division between the spiritual Reality and its worldly manifestation. Fortunately, this powerful anti-life attitude, though very influential at times, failed to make a permanent mark in the human psyche and one must be glad that Sri Aurobindo by way of his inner experience and profound reasoning has categorically dismissed it.

Sri Aurobindo, following the Upanishadic concept of the Self in all things, all things in the Self and all things as becomings of the Self, states that an escape from the terrestrial life is not the real solution of the evolutionary crisis of consciousness. It is true that man must transcend his mental consciousness and enter the realm of the supra-rational or the spiritual consciousness, but this spiritual effort instead of being exclusive and other-worldly must be largely inclusive and positive, aiming to realise the infinite Self in its integrity and bring it to bear upon the finite world for its transformation. This larger aim will lead to an active conquest of the lower nature and the terrestrial life by the Divine Power, which is the integral true liberation.

But then the question may be asked: Why was this larger spiritual effort not made by the spiritual men of the past, instead of following a limited, narrow path? Fundamentally, it was because the ancient mystics could not find an adequate power for a complete and lasting transformation of earthly life. They found the roots of ignorance so deeply planted in life that a transformation of them proved an impossible task and therefore they accepted only an escape from it into the pure and immutable Self. Sri Aurobindo points out that if the spiritual effort of the past failed to achieve the greater aim of uniting life with the Spirit it was because of an insufficiency of vision that discovered only a part of the secret and missed the whole and the complete truth.

Here lies the contribution of Sri Aurobindo who has made us aware of a greater Truth-realisation that will inevitably lead humanity to its highest perfection. Sri Aurobindo, basing himself on his spiritual realisations, assures us that a supreme self-determining Truth-Power of the Infinite Spirit which he calls the "Supermind" exists and that it is destined to emerge as the next higher step in the evolution of the terrestrial consciousness. And it is precisely this emergence that will bring about an effective conquest of the so-far insuperable imperfections of earthly life. Sri Aurobindo's forecast of the advent of the "Supermind" is categorical. All the basic difficulties of human life which could not be removed so far by any idealistic, ethical, religious or material means will be decisively conquered by the dynamic Truth-Power of the "Supermind". It is because Sri Aurobindo has a clear vision and grasp of this new principle, the "Supermind", that one can feel assured of a deliverance from the grip of ignorance, evil and suffering. Many do not understand fully the role Sri Aurobindo has played in redeeming humanity. For over four decades he made it his sole concern to conquer the roots of life's basic difficulties, feeling the immense load of humanity's suffering in himself. And, needless to say, even after his apparent

passing away, he is still very active in carrying his mission to its assured fulfilment

This then is the relevance of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga at present when humanity is passing through an evolutionary crisis. At a time when everything seems to be failing, one must adhere to Sri Aurobindo's firm assurance and vision. Man has been given the choice to change his present life into a Divine Life and there is no need for him to escape from it. One must be grateful to Sri Aurobindo that he has shown a whole range of divine possibilities that lie ahead for humanity and which will create a New World in which the modern man's life will be transfigured into a marvellous Divine Life