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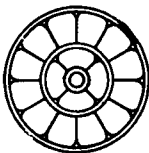
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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No. 6

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 15 AUGUST 1956

I HAVE a huge collection of questions here. I received yet one more today. This question raises perhaps the most difficult problem for the world; so I don't quite know if, precisely, in this Darshan atmosphere, it is very appropriate to touch upon such a problem. However, it is something infinitely interesting. One would like to find a fully satisfactory solution, for then at the same time one would have the key which opens the last door.

Man has always been faced with two possible attitudes when he has wanted to find a solution to the problem of the existence of the universe. It could be said from the practical point of view, that since the universe exists and exists as it does, the wisest thing is to take it as it is, and if one is not satisfied with it, well, to try to make it better. But even if one takes this very practical attitude, the problem remains: How to make it better? And once again one is facing the same fact which it seems impossible to resolve. Here you are, then:

The divine Will—and the Grace which manifests it—is all-powerful and nothing can exist which is not the expression of this divine Will and this Grace which manifests it.... The logical attitude—precisely the one described in the little book I read to you on Fridays now, *Wu Wei*¹—a perfect peace, a total surrender, putting aside all effort and all personal will, giving oneself up to the divine Will and letting it act through oneself.

Mind you, this is not at all easy, it is not as simple as it looks. But still, if one sincerely takes up this attitude, it is certain that immediately there comes a perfect inner peace, an unmixed bliss, and whatever may be the events of your life, they leave you totally indifferent. This has always been recommended for individual salvation; and I may remark in passing that in this little book, which is also very beautiful and very well written, the sage compares the state of surrender of which he speaks to a sea which is calm, blue, peaceful, vast, moved by a deep force, swelling up at the right moment, subsiding at the right moment—indeed, it is an ideal description. But a practical and somewhat objective mind immediately tells you, “Well, yes, but there are also tempests at sea, there are also terrible storms, tidal waves, engulfed islands. And so that is perhaps another aspect of the Divine, but it does not bring peace, at least not in the way described by the sage. One would have to be in another state of consciousness to be at peace in such circumstances, one must not compare oneself with the sea!” So the problem presents itself again.

Sri Aurobindo has made a study of all this in *The Life Divine*, and he tells us that there are sure signs of a progressive evolution. An evolution naturally tends

¹ *Wu Wei* a novel based upon the philosophy of Lao Tse, by Henri Borel (Librairie Fischbacher, 33 rue de Seine, Paris)

towards a goal, and if it is a progressive evolution one may continue to think that all is the expression of the divine Grace and Will, but that at the same time all is not as it ought to be. Everything is in accordance with the divine Will, but everything is not as it ought to be, otherwise things would not move.

And there we are faced with the problem once more.

The question I have been asked is this:

“Now that the Supermind has manifested on the earth, it must naturally follow that the divine Grace is all-powerful”, and I am asked: “Is this right?”

The divine Grace has always been all-powerful.

And yet, if we compare the world as it is with the more or less ideal world we can imagine when we come out of our ignorant consciousness and enter a consciousness which we call more divine, how is it that it is not always so good, if the Grace is all-powerful?

It would seem that the vision of what ought to be comes long before the execution—and this is what gives rise to the whole problem.... One sees ahead—or up above—the realisation, perhaps not of the next step, but still what will happen one day; and then as one sees it, one tells oneself, “But this conception is more divine than what is realised at present; therefore, if the Grace is all-powerful, it ought to be realised immediately.” I am now looking at the problem as the human mind, it seems to me, would put it or approximately so, in order to try and make myself understood.

But what does one call an all-powerful Grace? I don’t want to speak of the conceptions of an ordinary mind for which the all-powerful Grace is that which would instantaneously realise what it wants or believes to be the right thing; I am not speaking of that, we may eliminate this case, which is childish. But granting that somebody has a deeper, higher vision, a sort of inner perception of an ideal world where all the things which for us are very shocking would disappear; then one is truly faced with a problem which seems insoluble.

This translates itself in very ordinary minds into an over-simple and very childish form: either the divine Will is something unthinkable for us—which would not be surprising!—unthinkable and almost monstrous if It allows things to be as they are, if It wants things as they are, or else... the Grace is powerless.

That—I warn you to put you on your guard against the trap—that is the great argument of the Adversary. He uses it to cloud the mind and raise up revolt; but still, it is well thought out as a trap.

Then come those who say, “It is because you are in the Ignorance that you see like that; change your consciousness, enter into contact with the divine Consciousness and you will see differently ” This is perfectly correct. I was just telling you, and I repeat, that if you can manage to get out of the Ignorance and enter ever so little into union with the divine Reality, you live an ecstatic life in

which everything is marvellous, sublime, and where the Grace manifests in all things. Therefore, you have solved the problem for yourself on condition that you can remain in that state perpetually, which is not very easy. But still it is possible. But it draws you out of the world, prevents you from participating in the life of the world, and above all, if everything had to be changed in that way, I think an eternity would not suffice for all the elements of the world to be so transformed.

And the problem presents itself again. In whatever manner, by whatever way you approach it, it will always present itself again.

There is a solution.

Think about it, we shall speak about it again another time. There, I would like you to make an effort. For it is beneficial, because this is a sort of conflict in the human consciousness which comes up constantly; because it is a conflict which forms the basis of all oppositions to a concrete work; because this conflict makes people—I am speaking even of those who are the most enlightened in this field—always confuse spiritual life with an annihilation of the physical, material creation, as for them this is the sole means of escape: “Let us escape from the material reality and we escape the problem”, for, to be in the state where the problem doesn’t present itself any longer, one must get out of life—*according to them*.

There is a solution.

That will be for another time.

When back at the Ashram, after the class,
Mother made the following remark.

I gave the solution, this evening. I gave it twice in the class, without speaking.

Has this solution any connection with the date, August fifteenth? Is there any connection between the Feast of the Assumption in the Catholic Church and the date of Sri Aurobindo’s birth?

Yes. And he has also said it himself. The Assumption of the Virgin Mary is the divinisation of Matter. And this is the aim of the last Avatar.

(*Questions and Answers*, 1956, pp 266-270)

SRI AUROBINDO'S VISION OF THE FUTURE SOCIETY

PASSAGES COMPILED BY GOPAL BHATTACHARJEE

(Continued from the issue of May 1993)

PART II (Contd.)

WHAT HOLDS BACK HUMANITY FROM TAKING THE LEAP

Pursuit of An Ancient Secret

WE have then to return to the pursuit of an ancient secret which man, as a race, has seen only obscurely and followed after lamely, has indeed understood only with his surface mind and not in its heart of meaning,—and yet in following it lies his social no less than his individual salvation,—the ideal of the Kingdom of God, the secret of the reign of the Spirit over mind and life and body.

It is because they have never quite lost hold of this secret, never disowned it in impatience for a lesser victory, that the older Asiatic nations have survived so persistently and can now, as if immortal, raise their faces towards a new dawn; for they have fallen asleep, but they have not perished.

It is true that they have for a time failed in life, where the European nations who trusted to the flesh and the intellect have succeeded; but that success, speciously complete but only for a time, has always turned into a catastrophe.

Still Asia had failed in life, she had fallen in the dust, and even if the dust in which she was lying was sacred, as the modern poet of Asia has declared, —though the sacredness may be doubted,—still the dust is not the proper place for man, nor is to lie prostrate in it his right human attitude.

Asia temporarily failed not because she followed after things spiritual, as some console themselves by saying,—as if the Spirit could be at all a thing of weakness or a cause of weakness,—but because she did not follow after the spirit sufficiently, did not learn how entirely to make it the master of life.

Her mind either made a gulf and a division between life and the Spirit or else rested in a compromise between them and accepted as final socio-religious systems founded upon that compromise.

So to rest is perilous; for the call of the Spirit more than any other demands that we shall follow it always to the end, and the end is neither a divorce and departure nor a compromise, but a conquest of all by the Spirit and that reign of the seekers after perfection...

Steep Way before Man's Perfection

This truth it is important to note, for mistakes made on the path are often even more instructive than the mistakes made by turning aside from the path.

As it is possible to superimpose the intellectual, ethical or aesthetic life or the sum of their motives upon the vital and physical nature, to be satisfied with a partial domination or a compromise, so it is possible to superimpose the spiritual ideas and motives on the mental, vital and physical nature.

And either to impoverish the latter, to impoverish the vital and physical existence and even to depress the mental as well in order to give the spiritual an easier domination, or else to make a compromise and leave the lower being to its pasture on condition of its doing frequent homage to the spiritual existence, admitting to a certain extent, greater or less, its influence and formally acknowledging it as the last state and the finality of the human being.

This is the most that human society has ever done in the past, and though necessarily that must be a stage of the journey, to rest there is to miss the heart of the matter, the one thing needful. Not a humanity leading its ordinary life, what is now its normal round, touched by spiritual influences, but a humanity aspiring whole-heartedly to a law that is now abnormal to it until its whole life has been elevated into spirituality, is the steep way that lies before man towards his perfection and the transformation that it has to achieve.

Life Should Elevate Itself Towards Spirit

The Secret of the transformation lies in the transference of our centre of living to a higher consciousness and in a change of our main power of living.

This will be a leap or an ascent even more momentous than that which Nature must have at one time made from the vital mind of the animal to the thinking mind still imperfect in our human intelligence.

The central will implicit in life must be no longer the vital will in the life and the body, but the spiritual will of which we have now only rare and dim intimations and glimpses.

For now it comes to us hardly disclosed, weakened, disguised in the mental Idea; but it is in its own nature supramental and it is its supramental power and truth that we have somehow to discover.

The main power of our living must be no longer the inferior vital urge of Nature which is already accomplished in us and can only whirl upon its rounds about the egocentre, but that spiritual force of which we sometimes hear and speak but have not yet its inmost secret.

For that is still retired in our depths and waits for our transcendence of the ego and the discovery of the true individual in whose universality we shall be united with all others.

To transfer from the vital being, the instrumental reality in us, to the spirit, the central reality, to elevate to that height our will to be and our power of living is the secret which our nature is seeking to discover.

All that we have done hitherto is some half successful effort to transfer this will and power to the mental plane; our highest endeavour and labour has been to become the mental being and to live in the strength of the Idea.

But the mental idea in us is always intermediary and instrumental; always it depends on something other than it for its ground of action and therefore although it can follow for a time after its own separate satisfaction, it cannot rest for ever satisfied with that alone.

It must either gravitate downwards and outwards towards the vital and physical life or it must elevate itself inwards and upwards towards the Spirit.

Life Always Divided Between Two Tendencies

And that must be why in thought, in art, in conduct, in life we are always divided between two tendencies, one idealistic, the other realistic.

The latter very easily seems to us more real, more solidly founded, more in touch with actualities because it relies upon a reality which is patent, sensible and already accomplished; the idealistic easily seems to us something unreal, fantastic, unsubstantial, nebulous, a thing more of thoughts and words than of live actualities, because it is trying to embody a reality not yet accomplished.

To a certain extent we are perhaps right; for the ideal, a stranger among the actualities of our physical existence, is in fact a thing unreal until it has either in some way reconciled itself to the imperfections of our outer life or else has found the greater and purer reality for which it is seeking and imposed it on our outer activities; till then it hangs between two worlds and has conquered neither darkness.

Submission to the actual by a compromise is easy; discovery of the spiritual truth and the transformation of our actual way of living is difficult; but it is precisely this difficult thing that has to be done, if man is to find and fulfil his true nature.

Our idealism is always the most rightly human thing in us, but as a mental idealism it is a thing ineffective. To be effective it has to convert itself into a spiritual realism which shall lay its hands on the higher reality of the Spirit and take up for it this lower reality of our sensational, vital and physical nature.

Perfection of Man Lies in Unfolding Ever Perfect Spirit

This upward transference of our will to be and our power of life we have, then, to make the very principle of our perfection. That will, that power must choose between the domination of the vital part in us and the domination of the Spirit.

Nature can rest in the round of vital being, can produce there a sort of perfection, but that is the perfection of an arrested development satisfied with its own limits. This she can manage in the plant and the animal, because the life and the body are there at once the instrument and the aim; they do not look beyond themselves.

She cannot do it in man because here she has shot up beyond her physical and vital basis; she has developed in him the mind which is an outflowering of the life towards the light of the Spirit, and the life and the body are now instrumental and no longer their own aim.

Therefore the perfection of man cannot consist in pursuing the unilluminated round of the physical life. Neither can it be found in the wider rounds of the mental being; for that also is instrumental and tends towards something else beyond it, something whose power indeed works in it, but whose larger truth is superconscious to its present intelligence, supramental. The perfection of man lies in the unfolding of the ever-perfect Spirit.

Obedience to Spontaneous Principle of Spiritual Light

The lower perfection of Nature in the plant and the animal comes from an instinctive, an automatic, a subconscious obedience in each to the vital truth of its own being.

The higher perfection of the spiritual life will come by a spontaneous obedience of spiritualised man to the truth of his own realised being, when he has become himself, when he has found his own real nature.

For this spontaneity will not be instinctive and subconscious, it will be intuitive and fully, integrally conscious.

It will be a glad obedience to a spontaneous principle of spiritual light, to the force of a unified and integralised highest truth, largest beauty, good, power, joy, love, oneness.

The object of this force acting in life will and must be as in all life growth, possession, enjoyment, but a growth which is a divine manifestation, a possession and enjoyment spiritual and of the Spirit in things,—an enjoyment that will use, but will not depend on the mental, vital and physical symbols of our living.

Therefore this will not be a limited perfection of arrested development dependent on the repetition of the same forms and the same round of actions, any departure from which becomes a peril and a disturbance. It will be an illimitable perfection capable of endless variation in its forms,—for the ways of the Spirit are countless and endless,—but securely the same in all variations, one but multitudinously infinite.

Perfection Cannot Come by Mental Idea Dealing with Spirit

Therefore, too, this perfection cannot come by the mental idea dealing with the Spirit as it deals with life.

The idea in mind seizing upon the central will in Spirit and trying to give this higher force a conscious orientation and method in accordance with the ideas of the intellect is too limited, too darkened, too poor a force to work this miracle.

Still less can it come if we chain the Spirit to some fixed mental idea or system of religious cult, intellectual truth, aesthetic norm, ethical rule, practical action, way of vital and physical life, to a particular arrangement of forms and actions and declare all departure from that a peril and a disturbance or a deviation from spiritual living.

That was the mistake made in Asia and the cause of its arrested development and decline; for this is to subject the higher to the lower principle and to bind down the self-disclosing Spirit to a provisional and imperfect compromise with mind and the vital nature.

Man's true freedom and perfection will come when the Spirit within bursts through the forms of mind and life and, winging above to its own gnostic fiery height of ether, turns upon them from that light and flame to seize them and transform into its own image.

We Shall Be on the Right Road to Become Ourselves when...

...the mind and the intellect are not the key-power of our existence. For they can only trace out a round of half-truths and uncertainties and revolve in that unsatisfying circle.

But concealed in the mind and life, in all the action of the intellectual, the aesthetic, the ethical, the dynamic and practical, the emotional, sensational, vital and physical being, there is a power that sees by identity and intuition and gives to all these things such truth and such certainty and stability as they are able to compass.

Obscurely we are now beginning to see something of this behind all our science and philosophy and all our other activities

But so long as this power has to work for the mind and life and not for itself, to work in their forms and not by its own spontaneous light, we cannot make any great use of this discovery, cannot get the native benefit of this inner Daemon.

Man's road to spiritual supermanhood will be open when he declares boldly that all he has yet developed, including the intellect of which he is so rightly and yet so vainly proud, are now no longer sufficient for him, and that to uncase, discover, set free this greater Light within shall be henceforward his pervading preoccupation.

Then will his philosophy, art, science, ethics, social existence, vital pursuits

be no longer an exercise of mind and life, done for themselves, carried in a circle, but a means for the discovery of a greater Truth behind mind and life and for the bringing of its power into our human existence.

We shall be on the right road to become ourselves, to find our true law of perfection, to live our true, satisfied existence in our real being and divine nature.

(*The Human Cycle*, Vol. 15 of Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, pp. 225-230.)

(*To be continued*)

DUET

I AM free from the constraints of clouds,
 Gray no longer shadows me.

Let us soar heavenwards. Let us taste
 The Beloved's ecstasy, the ecstasy whispered
 On parted lips of love.
 Oh beautiful simplicity,
 The deathless footsteps pass.

Draw near, listen, I hear the thread
 Tightening across the threshold of time,
 The Profound's crescendo, as we
 Search for the mystery keys.

And as we step
 Into the exceptional
 We shall clothe ourselves with the golden dawn—
 Nothing more,
 And bear the psyche's wing
 Of the awakening, friend—
 Embraced wings of the beginning
 Which is now.

SUZANNE COSGROVE

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

I HAVE brought out from my drawer a regular heap of letters from you calling out for answers. All are vibrant with affectionate warmth and each has its own particular spark of inner light, showing that my friend has really been living with a sense of Sri Aurobindo tingling in his mind and a feeling of the Mother a-throb in his heart and, along with these Divine Ones, a few humans are also at home in his sincere aspiring life. I am sure nobody can say about you what my late friend Anil Kumar once told me people were saying about him. His words have stuck in my memory because of both their quaint imagery and their Anil-Kumarish English: "People think Anil Kumar has no backbone and no legs. He is simply sitting and digesting foods."

Let me try to take up your notes chronologically. I was surprised to find one as early in the year as 31.3.91. It is one of the shortest but packed with sweetness as well as an imaginative thrill. It has also a Biblical ring by a repeated use of the conjunction "And". It runs:

My dear Amal,

And then "Savitri" again!

And a Sunday of rest, relaxation and peace!

And when I come across the lines:

And Will is a conscious chariot of the Gods,

And Life, a splendour-stream of musing Force,

Carries the voices of the mystic Suns.

as a sequel there appears before my mind's eye Sri Aurobindo's "The Clear Ray"—my dear and rare friend "Amal Kiran". My feeling is too evident to elucidate.

I feel deeply moved, nor can I be happier than when I am associated with lines from *Savitri*. In my whole life in the Ashram I have made only two impassioned dramatic statements to the Mother. The first was a little ridiculous. It couched the very first declaration I made to her. I said with a sort of sweeping gesture: "I have seen everything of life. Now I want only God." You may remember that the Mother coolly asked me: "How old are you?" I replied: "Twenty-three." She gave what I may term a serious smile and remarked: "At twenty-three you have seen everything of life? Don't be in a hurry to make any decision. Stay here for some time and look around. If the life here suits you, join the Ashram." As I have always commented, the Mother's response was like ice-water dashed on my enthusiasm, but I realised that she was a Guru who was not averse to have disciples and this was definitely in her favour in my eyes. I stayed

on—for good! And it was many years later that I made my other impassioned pronouncement. I had worked almost single-handed for the Ashram to bring out the first one-volume edition of the complete *Savitri* along with the copious letters Sri Aurobindo had written to me apropos of his epic—the 1954 “University” publication. While preparing it I had several occasions to talk with the Mother on various points and she was quite aware of my labour of love. Still, it so happened that when the book was out she did not give me a copy. After a few days I drew her attention to the fact and declared what *Savitri* meant to me. I made the resounding statement: “I would give my heart’s blood for *Savitri*.” She at once asked Champaklal for a copy and, writing my name on it and signing, presented it to me.

Yes, I would give my heart’s blood because it is as if it were itself given to me by *Savitri*! Ever since, apropos of a certain spiritual situation suggested by a poem of mine, Sri Aurobindo quoted two lines telling of a Ray from the Transcendent coming through the silent Brahman—

Piercing the limitless Unknowable,
Breaking the vacancy and voiceless peace—

ever since he quoted them and, in answer to my question where these profoundly reverberating lines had hailed from, wrote the single word “*Savitri*”—ever since that mystery-packed moment I have felt my very heart to be a rhythm of life wakened by the grace of the Power which could create such poetry and whose Ray from the Transcendent was the ultimate source of whatever little light was sought to be evoked in me by the Aurobindonian gift of my new name “Amal Kiran” meaning “The Clear Ray”.

You write as though my life were already carrying “the voices of the mystic Suns”. I wish that were true. But what is true is that indeed from far-away those golden accents have raised as an echo in my depths the constant prayer:

Voice of Infinity, sound in my heart,—
Call of the One!
Stamp there thy radiance, never to part,
O living Sun.

Your next “missive” is of 13.4.91. It has many interesting facets of your inner and outer life. I pick out a few You have conjured up the picture of some of you sitting around Nolini after his dinner and before putting him to bed. The talk turns on past births. Somebody asks N who you were in the Ramayana epoch (Yuga). You write: “He did not answer, kept quiet. When pressed again, he replied very softly: ‘He was a friend of mine.’” No wonder you were “overjoyed”, thinking: “being his friend I was not far away from the Divine,

—he being with the Divine.” I am glad to mark that for all your devotion to N the topmost concern in you was the Divine and you did not stop short with whatever was noteworthy Nolinian and that to you the most noteworthy part in him was the one turned Divineward. The next point that strikes me is the natural way in which “the Ramayana epoch” figures in the talk. It is taken for granted that it was a genuine historical age and not a mytho-legendary one. Sri Aurobindo has affirmed that in the cultural process of the ages the Rama-figure stands for the establishment of the dharmic (ethical) mind over the mental titanism on the one hand and on the other the animal mentality, two trends in the path of human evolution. Sri Aurobindo also declares that in the Rama depicted by Valmiki he can feel the afflatus of Avatarhood, the movements of a consciousness beyond the personal, a consciousness that has a cosmic character. How far back in time Rama may be considered to have existed? My new chronology dates Krishna at the time of the Bharata War to c. 1482 or 1452 B.C. The recent underwater archaeological finds at Dwaraka put Krishna’s submerged Dwaraka at about the same time. In the traditional table of royal genealogies, starting with Manu Vaivasvata, Krishna’s number is 94 and Rama’s 65—a difference of 30 generations. Taking a generation to be roughly 30 years we get about 900 years. This would carry Rama to around 900 years before the Bharata War: that is, c. 2382 or 2352 B.C.

Here I may clear a possible misunderstanding. In chapter X, verse 31 of the Gita, Krishna speaking of his Vibhutis (manifesting human instruments) tells us: “I am Rama among warriors.” We must remember that Indian tradition knows of two Ramas: Rama Jamadagnya and Rama Dasarathi. The former is also called Parasurama, “Rama of the Axe”. This designation distinguishes him as a warrior. It is to him that Krishna refers.

You have quaintly wondered, before Nolini’s reply, whether your “evolution” had reached the “human level by that period”. According to archaeology, man in some form or other is about two million years old. The modern form was approached at least 20,000 years ago. Surely, there has been time enough for each of us to attain the human level by the Rāmayana epoch. The Tantra calculates that three lakhs of lives had to be passed through before the soul could have a human embodiment. Earth’s long history amply allows time for our pre-human past. You and I are certain to have been real Manu-man (mental being) and not something like Hanu-man when Rama flourished and Nolini was in his train. In fact, I believe that most disciples of Sri Aurobindo were with Sri Aurobindo each time he manifested in human history, especially when he must have taken an Avataric form to establish a new level of consciousness.

A prominent feature of your letter is the “vision” you had of Mahakali in the state of a semi-sleep into which you had entered after reading those beautiful words of the Mother to Huta published by Huta in *White Roses*: “Behind the sorrow and loneliness, behind the emptiness and the feeling of incapacity, there

is the golden light of the Divine Presence shining soft and warm.” You write about the Mahakali you saw: “She was not terrible-looking, she looked affectionate and soothing...” Your pair of adjectives answer well to the Mother’s “soft and warm”. Of course, Mahakali too, as Sri Aurobindo has said, “is the Mother...” And her motherliness, her affectionate and soothing aspect is natural for those who invoke her to remove their defects with rapidity, those who are on her side and not stuck in their follies and obscurities. The dreadful aspect is only for those who are enemies of the Divine within and without. “Terrible,” writes Sri Aurobindo, “is her face to the Asura.” (10.9.1991)

*

According to the ancient Indian wisdom, our non-spiritual condition, our delusive ignorance consists essentially in being locked up in ourselves, being exclusive of our true reality which includes everyone and everything, an inner vastness which rules out the feeling of the other, the alien that can oppose and injure one. Do you remember the Chhandogya Upanishad’s glorious utterance: “There is no happiness in the small: immensity alone is felicity”? The Rigveda always associates *brihat* (the Vast) with its *satyam* (the True) as well as its *ritam* (the Right) in describing the supreme world of the soul’s fulfilment.

I say “world” because the Rishis employ the term *loka* or its equivalents which do not cut off the Beyond from the Here; it is not into a worldlessness that one enters when one is “fear-free”, the term the Rigveda uses for the highest spiritual realisation: one enters an ideal world high above, which has no divisiveness and fulfils our multiple earthly existence by providing the basic unity weaving everything together instead of setting one part over against the others as here below. And the correspondence of the higher with the lower in being no void, no worldlessness, leads to the compatibility of the Here and the Beyond so that the Seers, once they have realised the underlying unity of things by constant contact with the Beyond, do not fly away from the Here but remain to work towards a finer and greater life: there is no “refusal of the ascetic” as in later ages.

The compatibility persists as a vital element in the Upanishads where often there is talk of Brahmaloka and not just Brahman. The context in which Yajnavalkya and Janaka figure with their “That which is free from fear” (a Rigvedic echo) is, I think, particularly rich in reference to Brahmaloka. Indeed Yajnavalkya is a denizen *par excellence* of both the Here and the Yonder: with one hand he keeps a hold on the earth and with the other reaches out to the empyrean. In a most exalted way he settles for “All this and Heaven too”. He seems to have anticipated Sri Aurobindo in a more flamboyant manner than would suit our Master’s nature.

Your letter of 23.5.91 relates two dreams, both on a Tuesday. Your dreams

of Nolini used to occur mostly on this day—but now, in answer to your call to him, a lesser sadhak made his appearance as though he were an envoy from him. What you saw seems to add one more chapter to Amal Kiran's visits to the Press in the old days to carry out some alterations and corrections. Such a move by him is characteristic. He is a typical case of the ache for perfection in both poetry and prose. Some ideality ever haunts him and he goes on chiselling until the vague vision he has discerned in his depths looks out at him from his literary work in a splendid clarity suddenly emerging from his stroke on shaping stroke on the challenging material before him. If not in anything else, his copious alterations and corrections show him to be a true disciple of the creator of *Savitri* who made nearly a dozen transcripts of it in order not merely to make it as poetic as possible but also to charge it with the utmost power of spiritual illumination. Apropos of your dream I may add that along with typifying the ever-aspiring Amal the writer, what you dreamt of typifies the never-tiring helper in you. You have recorded your response to my proposal for alterations and corrections: "My attitude was—these must be done: we must oblige him." (10.9.1991)

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You have written: "Yesterday a friend of mine asked a question to which I would like to have an answer. I can't find it. She was telling me how shockingly dirty and noisy and smelly Pondicherry is felt in contrast to the U.S.A. I said that this feeling would wear off, that she would get used to Pondicherry. Then she said: 'Yes, I know I'll get used to it, but why do I have to get used to all this dirt and disturbance when I can live in a beautiful place?' So that's the question. Of course to be in Pondicherry in the Ashram is the apparent answer. But what is the spiritual reason for her having to be in an environment which is unpleasant and distasteful?"

I think the problem goes beyond Pondicherry though Pondicherry is a significant focus in the spiritual reason for your friend having to be in an environment comparatively repulsive. The problem touches on India as a whole in contrast to the U.S.A. And, as your friend is in Pondicherry for the Ashram, we have to ask why of all countries India, which Pondicherry with its Ashram represents, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother chose for their spiritual work.

I believe India was chosen for what I regard as the supreme divine manifestation for two reasons. The inner being of what historically and geographically has come to be known as the Indian subcontinent is spiritually charged beyond that of any other country. From the time of the ancient Rigveda to our own day the soul-search for the Eternal and the Infinite has been more intense here than anywhere else. India has the greatest potentiality for the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. This is the first reason.

The second reason is that at present India's outer being is very deeply sunk in dirt and noise and stench reflecting a marked imperfection in life-style. Such

an excessive condition calls out for a change. Hence the Divine's response by physically carrying on its work in the midst of all this disagreeable environment. The extraordinary inner spiritual potentiality has to come forth and set right the marked exterior imbalance. Especially fitting is it for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to be here because their Integral Yoga is meant not for a glorious flight to a perfect Beyond but for a splendid all-round manifestation of a Divine Life on earth. That manifestation has to be through a power of the Spirit mostly unexplored hitherto and never really mobilised for terrestrial use, a power of the supreme Personal Godhead which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother call Supermind or Truth-Consciousness. The power's transformative no less than creative fullness is not only high above, waiting to descend, but also hidden below in Matter itself to be evoked for evolution by its free counterpart in co-operation with the aspiring and self-surrendering human soul.

Of course we need not seek out as much as possible the marked exterior imbalance of the Indian scene. All Pondicherry is not haunted by it. But if it falls to our lot and we try to escape instead of dealing with it, we shall fail to be followers of the Aurobindonian mission which has selected India very deliberately for its field. That mission aims ultimately to alter the ugly surroundings it is set in and, in the meantime, it has given us the ability to rise above the surrounding ugliness by an inner equanimity while outwardly doing our best to change it with whatever means we possess. The Mother, who was put forward by Sri Aurobindo as the Shakti of his dynamic world-vision, exemplified at the same time the bringing forth of the highest spiritual consciousness and the most refined artistic taste which would help transfigure the extremely deficient Indian scene.

Out of all improvable places in India Pondicherry has become Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's centre of action because it has most suited their mission. By an *ādes*h, an inner command, by Sri Krishna, Sri Aurobindo left his political life and went first to Chandernagore in French India and then to Pondicherry. If he had remained in British India he would have never been free from the harassment a nationalist leader, who had set his sights on his country's complete independence, would have suffered. As for the Mother, Sri Aurobindo's being in the capital of French India was just right for her who was a French citizen and had heard of him from her husband who had gone there four years earlier and returned now in connection with the programme of a political party in the town.

Hence, as Aurobindonians, we have to be in India's Pondicherry in order to help to the furthest extent the greatest spiritual mission on earth and calmly bear whatever physical conditions in it we cannot change in spite of our best efforts. These conditions are not accidental on the whole: they are bound up with a divine destiny.

(10.1.1993)

A friend thought it a good idea to make me recite the whole of *Savitri* as well as several short poems of Sri Aurobindo. Twice a week the recording was done. It took a long time for all this verse to combine with Amal's voice—come out “amalgamated”, we may say.

The first principle of good recitation is that the words should stand forth clearly. One may put emotion in, but not by blurring the words. I once heard a passage from the book *The Mother* declaimed at the Playground by one of our boys when Jawaharlal Nehru had visited the Ashram. It was a powerful passage—I think about the action of Mahakali—but the declaimer was so carried away and spoke so vehemently with all his passion poured into the meaning that I could hardly recognise the words. I have also listened to taped readings by eminent English poets—T.S. Eliot, for instance. Although Eliot made each word clear-cut, one was sent to sleep after a time by the utterly neutral tone. This was the other extreme. To get the right mean, one must realise a few facts. I know that in good poetry the emotion is in-built, the words are so arranged by inspiration that they carry home the heart-thrill meant to be communicated. But surely to adopt a monotone is not to do justice to the varied cunning of felicitous phrase and rhythm that constitutes true poetry. Some change of pitch and volume and speed is called for, not overwhelming the words but helping them to take off properly towards the hearer. The in-built heart-thrill is such that it can be caught by reading silently with the eye, but when it has to be transferred audibly to the non-reader, the voice has to wing it just a little. For, the hearer is not always able to concentrate on the felicities of art: they need to be brought out by the play of the reciter's tone. Some judicious “emoting” with the voice is in order. But the emoting must have behind it a genuine steeping of the declaimer in both the content and the form of the verse. He must be careful of stresses, the quantities (that is, the long and short vowels) the pauses, not to mention the pronunciation, no less than receptive of the inner thrust of the poet's vision. In other words, the emoting has to do nothing more than convey the poem's own emotion by an echo in one's heart and a reflex in one's mind. As little as possible of one's private feeling should be added. The moment this feeling intervenes substantially the language is apt to get fuzzy. The moment the fuzziness starts, the very first principle of good recitation is violated: the correct conveyance of the verbal shape, the verbal structure. (29.7.1983)

AMAL KIRAN
(K.D. SETHNA)

TRIBUTE TO AN OLD COMRADE

IN the last of the six talks I gave from August 26, 1970 to October 20, 1971, at our International Centre of Education, which along with two by Nirodbaran have been published under the significant title *Light and Laughter*, I spoke in a personal vein at one point. I briefly discharged a debt of gratitude. The words I used are very apt in view of the event which took place in the morning of April 18 this year. Let me quote them for the benefit of those who were not a part of my audience and who are unlikely to know much about the early years of life in the Ashram, especially the 'thirties. I came to my subject in a somewhat indirect though not irrelevant way. I said:

“In sadhana the place of the mind is not only at the feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother: it is also between the pages of their books. The only thing to take care about is that you should not grow intellectually overactive. Otherwise you start analysing yourself all the time and that is hardly conducive to the Supermind's coming or even to less spectacular progress. There's one chap in the Ashram I know who has never sat in judgment on his own sadhana or indulged in nagging self-analysis. And he has been perhaps one of the happiest here. Though not an intellectual, he is quite bright and intelligent, yet he has never worried to find out whether he was progressing or not. Most of you know him. Apart from his service to the Mother, he is now best known as a teacher of Hathayogic Asanas, but formerly he was most notable as one of the two closest friends of Amal, the other having been Premanand, the first librarian the Ashram had. Yes, I mean Ambu—our energetic, outspoken, humbug-proof, loyal-natured Ambu.

“In the old days he had a somewhat foppish air, but there was no effeminacy in him and, though he looked a little weak, he had a lot of courage. And I may say from repeated experience that he has a rare capacity of giving unstinted service. He has been of immense help to me, he has nursed me through illnesses and permitted me to be as incompetent as I liked. Thanks to him, I was able even to keep a stove and use it—I mean he managed it and I enjoyed its benefits. I am not very good at housekeeping and, though my incompetence may not match that of Dilip Kumar Roy who once told me that if he had to dust his own furniture every day he would prefer to commit suicide, I have been pretty much of a dud in domestic science. I used always to think in the old days that Ambu had the qualities of an ideal wife. Good job he was not born a woman, because husbands are not often ideal, and a husband having such a wife would never have let her go to become a Yogini. Ambu has become a Yogi—but what distinguishes him is that he has kept all bothering about Yoga out of his life: he has let the Mother do the bothering. He has cared only to serve her. When you keep thinking of her instead of your own progress you find the secret of happiness. As a result, I don't believe Ambu was ever depressed. I have seen him sickly-faced

at times, I have seen him a little sad too on occasion, but never depressed. And that is an excellent way of living For, with depression there comes a lot of Yogic upset. Unfortunately there are such a lot of people here who are depressed that I would say a sort of caste-system has sprung up with a large section which can be called the Depressed Class. We also know that depressions are always followed by inner havocs—storms in sadhana, psychological counterparts of the cyclones that time and again sweep over Pondicherry. And you may have read in the newspapers how these cyclones develop: we are told they develop because of some depression in the Bay of Bengal.”

Have I anything to add to this vignette with its trailing off lightly into a generality? The active Ambu I had known came to a sorry pass: he got afflicted with Parkinson’s Disease. But there was no depression still and the faith in the Mother’s Grace remained an inner steadying truth. Right up to the end he persisted in paying daily visits with friendly help to the first floor of the Ashram’s main building where in the days of his prime he used to take for the Mother the food cooked specially for her by three sadhikas. I may mention that he had an artistic side to him. His room is a regular museum of rare shells, strange stones and other fantasies of Nature. I am told that we owe to him one of the series called *Mantras of the Mother*. The Mother asked him to write for her a daily sentence in English. He countered by praying to her to do the same for him. Thus a valuable little book got compiled.

I have noted and praised Ambu’s close association with me. As close was his connection with Udar and his family. With great devotion he practically supervised, along with Udar and his wife Mona, their baby daughter Gauri’s growing up into a pretty girl and woman. She knew him as “Uncle Ambu”. He had a genius for selfless affectionate relationship. A warm bond he had formed also with the poet Harindranath Chattopadhyaya during his two-year stay in the Ashram. I remember too how effortlessly he had mixed with Arjava (John Chadwick) who was not always a very easy person to get on with. Arjava had even made Ambu learn by heart a couple of his poems.

Ambu joined the Ashram in 1928, less than a year after I did. So he was the second earliest Ashramite surviving. Behari, who expired a few days earlier than Ambu, was the third, with his arrival in 1929. Shanti Doshi whose death shortly preceded Behari’s was the fourth earliest, having joined the Ashram in 1930, at the age of a mere 13. Nirodbaran, whom we are happy to have still amongst us, stands fifth with 1932 to his credit.

AMAL KIRAN

NIRODBARAN'S TALK ON CHAMPAKLAL

(Continued from the issue of May 1993)

PART II

Champaklal's Collaboration with the Mother

ONE can write a small volume on the second chapter of Champaklal's life spent with the Mother, from Sri Aurobindo's passing to her passing, and his vigilant collaboration with her in her multiform physical material, even occult activities concerning the inmates, visitors, bhaktas, etc.; but since much is known about it, I shall bring to focus only the important episodes which are known to me. Some of them have been recorded in my book: *Memorable Contacts with the Mother*.

Sri Aurobindo's sudden departure left us forlorn. Our close golden bond for twelve years with the One who was our Master, Friend, Guide—our Immortality—was cut asunder. "Shall we (at least myself) have to go back to the old world to resume our duties?" That was the question. Days dragged on, we two, Champaklal and myself, still holding together, but without any communication, as if we were strangers to each other moving about like shadows—this was our inner condition. I had a fear that I might be sent back to take up some other work, but we were not kept long in suspense. When the Mother resumed her work after twelve days, she out of her compassion allowed me to continue my life as before, while Champaklal was restored to his original service with the Mother. She said to me one day, "Along with Nolini, you have a lot of work to do on Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*." And allocating the corner which she had used as her sitting room, she added, "This is your study." And she asked Udar to prepare whatever furniture I would need for my work. Later on, when I had settled down, she said, "This new typewriter is imported from Germany for your *Savitri*-work."

Thus I was installed as a member of the divine family, neighbour to the Mother, as it were, with Pavitra-da on the one wing, Champaklal and myself on the other. I could see her moving about and was at her beck and call, so to say, though she rarely called. It was my unique privilege to be in her atmosphere, and breathe her divine fragrance from a distance, then, whenever called, to approach her with timid yet exultant steps.

Champaklal, on the other hand, who became her lion and her Hanuman afterwards, began with a modest but useful work as a preparation for a more serious one in her Presence. A room was given to him on the landing place leading to the Mother's new room which was constructed somewhere in 1952 or 1953. There he was to receive the parcels, offerings, presents etc. meant for the Mother while Nolini and Amrita used to visit her for their daily work. He was also given the charge of controlling the visitors to the Mother. He was quite strict

in this respect. He would see to it that the visitors had really obtained a genuine permission and that they did not take too much liberty with the Mother by misusing her time. His cross-questioning of the visitors was an ordeal for them. It was as if they were put in the witness-box in a court facing the interrogations of the counsel. There is a verse in *Savitri*:

None can reach Heaven who has not passed through Hell

which I parodied thus:

None can go to the Mother who has not passed
through Champaklal.

When the Mother heard it while I was reading *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo* to her, she smiled. I think one of the sadhikas, later an admirer of Champaklal, has written about her ordeal in this regard. In this way he performed his duties faultlessly albeit somewhat harshly.

However, soon he got his legitimate promotion when the Mother's work increased in her room. Her many-sided activities: interviews with visitors, v.i.p.s, inmates, presents, post parcels pouring in after Sri Aurobindo's passing. Who else but Champaklal could put this motley assortment of activities in a harmonious order? Thus he made himself indispensable to her and served her for years till her passing.

Among all this plethora of duties I will select a few to give a rough idea of their nature. For example, his preparation of birthday cards—which was one of the most elaborate and impeccable works of art he accomplished, putting his heart and soul into it. I observed once how much meticulous care, sense of beauty and perfection he concentrated on them!—all the instruments and materials—scissors, knives, cutting machines, gums, pastes, colours, papers, cardboards, the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's pictures of various sizes, ready by his side—to prepare each card. It was verily a divine passion with him. And for hundreds of inmates, children and disciples! Those who have still preserved them as souvenirs of the Mother's blessings, messages inscribed in the Mother's excellent handwriting, will bless Champaklal for this precious gift. And he earned on the other hand the Mother's encomium: "Champaklal, Master of Cards." We used to vie with each other to see our respective cards and appreciate the beauty of the artefacts. Once Amrita-da came to see one of my birthday cards because he had learnt that something special had been written on it by the Mother.

He used also to be present during the Mother's work with Huta and the recording of her talks with Satprem which has now come out as the *Agenda*. Two copies were made of the *Agenda*, one of which was in Champaklal's custody in

the Mother's room. After her passing that copy was found missing. Somebody must have innocently given it to Satprem on demand by him for some plausible reason.

Champaklal had a number of almirahs at his disposal to store the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's books, and photos of various sizes, for her to distribute to the inmates on their birthdays in her divine largesse. One interesting instance comes to mind. A young boy, who had no interest or capacity to understand Sri Aurobindo's works, was given as his birthday present a number of Sri Aurobindo's more difficult books. He protested to her, saying, "Mother, you know I can't read. I have no use for these." She argued, "Keep them with you, all the same." Surprise of surprises! Later when I came to know him somewhat intimately, I saw that he had become a different man, and he confessed that now Sri Aurobindo's books alone interested him and in his special work he has found many practical suggestions, guiding intimations from them. He is now bringing out a book on the working of the five elements in our system, based on Sri Aurobindo's observations in his book *The Life Divine*.

Another hobby Champaklal took up was marbling. At one time the Mother evinced some interest in this art. People were explaining and demonstrating to her its technique and place in this Art of Painting. Champaklal was taken up by its newness. He was always attracted to new things.

After finishing his work with the Mother and coming down at night, I saw him doing all kinds of experiments in his room with this art of marbling with various colours sprinkled on the surface of the water collected in a broad vessel, forgetting his food and sleep until he achieved success. He showed them to the Mother. We have seen some of these paintings bearing the significances given to them by the Mother.

His service was, however, interrupted by a sudden attack of an uncommon malady in our atmosphere. He had a hereditary tendency to arthritis. His backbone was particularly vulnerable, which often made him suffer from a backache aggravated by his long sitting position. He used to ignore it. Once he consulted our doctors about it, but their advice did not meet with his approval. At that time a pamphlet on urine therapy fell into his hands. It claimed to be a panacea for all kinds of diseases. Champaklal, always an experimenter, now utterly desperate, wanted to give it a chance. We may remember the former Prime Minister of India, Morarji Desai, had also recourse to this therapy which he claimed yielded splendid results. Champaklal also found relief from the use of this remedy and he was extremely happy that he could continue the Mother's work. But, as he continued the treatment without taking sufficient precautions about its use, he fell seriously ill. Pain in the joints, high fever and other toxic symptoms confined him to bed for quite a long time. Dr. Sanyal, the Mother's doctor, used to treat him, and Kamala and myself attended upon him. Sanyal kept the Mother informed about his condition. His recovery took time. When,

after a long absence, he met the Mother he was moved to tears. The Mother's Presence and caress soon restored him to his normal health. I got the chance of accompanying him for some days to have the Mother's darshan. At that time, she said to me: "Nirod, take care of Champaklal's health." Unfortunately I could not fulfil that obligation in spite of my best intentions, due to various factors that intervened in the last period of Champaklal's life.

Before I close this subject let me speak about a fairly long interlude during which I had a chance of reading to the Mother my recently finished book *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*. Champaklal was always present on these occasions. Once I told the Mother that my chapter on Her was very short and I felt very sad about it. Then suddenly Champaklal shouted, "Ask Mother for inspiration." She simply smiled. I did as I was told and, to my utter surprise, inspiration came down in full force and it became the longest chapter. Strangely enough, all the facts I had written there were known to me, but a veil seemed to have shut them from my vision. The Mother simply removed that veil as it were and I could see. It was a novel experience indeed. Even while writing poetry under Sri Aurobindo's inspiration I did not feel such a prolonged outflow.

I wind up my story with the Mother's last days when She was suffering from a mysterious ailment and her condition was deteriorating. It was the most painful phase of her life. Since we have written at length on this painful phase in our books, I shall here mention only briefly Champaklal's exemplary service to the Mother at that time. For days and days, Pranab and Champaklal had to forgo their sleep, rest, even food, for one of them had to be constantly at her side. Champaklal used to come and lie down on the terrace for snatches of rest, when there would be a sudden call from Pranab, and he would have to spring up and rush to her side, till one day the tragic drama came to an end. The last living memory we cherish is of her final Darshan on Sri Aurobindo's birthday.

(To be continued)

SOME EPISODES IN THE LIFE OF “AN EXTRAORDINARY GIRL”

A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION

(Continued from the issue of March 1993)

LET me start with a few pickings from my current contacts with the Lord before we begin our usual narration.

The other day I said to him, “I get very easily upset by physical or material inconveniences; for instance, minor problems like the failure of electricity make me imagine a world of obstacles I would have to manage in order to set it right.” I prayed to him to remove this inborn nervous weakness. He answered, “No, I can’t do that. You have to try to do it yourself.”

“Why did he say that?” I asked Nirod-da.

“Well,” he replied, “that is common sense. We ourselves have to make some effort. If the Divine did everything for us, then no sadhana would be needed. We have to do our own bit, and only then leave the rest to him. I have seen how easily you perceive things as dark and dreary and feel helpless in spite of the fact that the Lord is always with you. Since you were brought up by your father like a hot-house plant, life has gone very smoothly for you. Now you are having to pay for it.”

On another occasion, I told the Lord that I saw him often and heard his voice, but one thing I had never received was his blessings with his two hands placed on my head. To this he answered, “That is very difficult. Things like visions and dreams are much easier than physical contacts.”

In this fashion, I go on talking to him when I am in my room “O Lord, where are you? Why have you left me alone? Where are you?” And suddenly I hear his voice, “कि?” meaning “What is it?” Only one syllable but how sweetly said!

Another day I asked him a silly question: “Champaklal, Nirod-da and others have served you so well and you have loved them all. Was there no jealousy among them, say particularly between Champaklal and Nirod-da?” He laughed and said, “Ask Nirod.” So I am asking you, Nirod! Tell me.

“It is a very interesting question particularly coming from a woman, for in women this frailty is supposed to be more commonly found. Our group, however, consisted of men, and elderly men at that. So we were more or less free from that taint of personality. Besides each one of us had his own duty allotted to him according to the nature of his service and his personal convenience regarding time. Maharaj—that is, Champaklal—and myself had to be present most of the time, but somehow I did not feel any jealousy of him. We combined very well indeed. But the main reason for our harmonious comradeship was Sri

Aurobindo himself whose impersonality bound us together. He was Samam Brahman, affable towards all of us—whereas in the Mother’s case, it was her personal aspect that was in front as she had to deal with each person individually. I have said elsewhere that Sri Aurobindo was the very epitome of impersonality. Your question takes me back to those days and makes me relive the time spent in his adorable Presence.”

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I came in 1978 for the Darshan in February and did not feel inclined to go back, though I knew that I could not stay on, for money matters, property, etc. would have to be settled before I could ever think of making the Ashram my home. On the other hand I felt so much peace that it outweighed every other consideration. In this state of conflict I thought of praying to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo to help me find a house where I could live by myself. On hearing my prayer, Sri Aurobindo said, “Why should you go back? Haven’t you been taught enough lessons? Now give your mind to Sadhana for which I have brought you here. You have to give up your attachments. You can’t go on whiling away your time in idle talk and cheap company. Have a firm determination. I have given you asylum here since your childhood and it still stands and will stand for ever.”

“But where shall I stay?” I asked.

“Why, you’re quite comfortable at Sahana’s place, aren’t you?” he replied.

“But how can I stay there for good? There must be some security for me, and who will look after me here? I’m all alone!”

“There’s no need of any security. X will do all that is required. You needn’t bother your head about it.”

But I was not satisfied with this answer and went on, “Everybody here is well placed, but I have none to call my own. I’m a stranger.”

“Stranger? Then how are you able to live here so peacefully?”

“But some accommodation is needed.”

“Well, you’ll get Rs. 500/- a month for your expenses, not more. That should be enough.”

A few days later, I was still praying to stay on. This time he answered, “Instead of prayer, have trust in my word. That should be your main Sadhana.”

Another day I said to him, “Do show me how to do meditation. As I can’t settle my mind, I do japa.”

He made a gesture of joining the thumb and index finger of both hands and doing the japa:

कृष्ण केशव पाहि मां;
मा श्रीअरविन्द त्राहि मां ।

O Krishna, Keshav save me;
O Mother and Sri Aurobindo, deliver me!

I very distinctly heard him uttering the japa

Whenever I don't see him, I complain and he says, "Be like a child, just as you were when you came first, because like that you'll see me. I am in you."

"I don't understand."

"At that time, you were not concerned about other people's opinions. You would just jump into the Mother's lap. Give up your desire to be good in people's eyes "

Some days later:

"Nirod-da says he would like to write and publish all that you tell me. It would be good for others, he says "

"Nirod? What has *he* to say? It is I who am making him say it."

"Can I ever speak of your greatness?"

"What greatness of mine can you speak of? On the contrary, what you say will be good for *you*."

"What good?"

"Why, the more you will think of me, the better it will be for you."

"But am I not thinking of you as much as I can?"

"No, if it is to be written about, you will have to think deeply indeed."

*One day I was thinking of all that I had told Nirod-da. Sahana says that there is something like an Intermediate Zone and people going there hear lots of things and take them to be genuine. Since the Guru isn't there, one can't verify their truth. Who knows if I am not hearing the same kind of thing? At once I heard the Guru's answer saying, "Shame! Sitting before the samadhi you are thinking like this? And you believe it?"

"Lord, if you were in your body, the question would not arise. People too would believe it."

"It doesn't matter in the least. The effect would be just the same whether I were in the body or not."

"But people won't believe—"

"It's not with their belief, but with your own that I am concerned."

"I understand, Lord. But I am so insignificant—where is the power in me by which I can write or speak about you?"

"Oh, you are priding yourself on your humility? Beware! The consciousness in which you find yourself at present may not remain at all times. So do Sadhana from now on."

"I don't tell everything to Nirod-da lest he should disbelieve it. That's why I

* I reproduce this old talk now because there are people who doubt like Sahana. Not that they will be convinced, but I must do my job. In fact, I discovered this talk accidentally as I was going through my records

did not speak of the incident regarding Sri Ramakrishna ”

“No, you must be candid. Whether he believes you or not, you have to tell him.”

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

MIGRATION

AN invisible great migration has already begun in earnest
 Drawn by a Majestic Golden Swan flying in a pale moonlight,
 Flocks of ducks, geese and swans abandon their feeding grounds,
 Familiar lakes, marshes and ponds and rise with a wild clamour
 To join the Queen circling high up in the sky.
 She is the lovely Golden Swan for whom they have waited so long.
 She will take them to a happy Kingdom where deadly traps and arrows,
 Cunning predators and ruthless hunters have no access to the land.
 Far, far away from this blind, violent, intolerant, sickening world,
 Where one lives in fear even of his intimate neighbour,
 Illness, death and disaster stalk us quietly at all hours.
 Victims of our own folly, we set fire to our own houses.
 To slay a deer, slaughter a cow, shoot doves and pigeons by scores,
 Stab an old friend, strangle the brother and the sister,
 Are day's work of the carnivore we harbour in our nature.
 My soul has heard the whistle of the Swan Queen calling us to assemble
 High above the jungles where She is circling, waiting, waiting for us all.
 Early in the morning while the sky is still dark, the signal is given.
 Led by the Swan Queen, the great formation of wings fly into the Sun rising
 After crossing long centuries of deserts and joy-fields,
 Mountains and forests, smoke-laden huge cities,
 Deafening airfields, busy ports, stale and decadent societies,
 Swift trains and overcrowded roads and lanes leading nowhere,
 They discover lying below an entranced land of heavenly harmony.
 They notice with surprise a fringe of gold on their own wings.
 An emerald earth set with sapphires, radiant with an inner fire,
 Dotted with crystal cathedrals sending up swelling organ choirs,
 Greets the Noble Queen followed by a legion of gold-tipped wings.

NIRANJAN GUHA ROY

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of May 1993)

The Mother's Message

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



ON the night of 19th June 1965 I had a vision. The next morning I expressed in detail what I had seen and felt. The intense inspiration was that the Mother should have her house in Auroville, because without the Spirit of Auroville the whole town would be lifeless. The Mother answered on the same day:

“Huta, my dear little child,

You have indeed a very sweet soul who makes very sweet projects and

beautiful dreams—all that is passed on directly to the Lord who will show us clearly what is His decision.

Meanwhile it is not to Nava that I shall show the letter but to the architect of Auroville when he arrives and see with him the way of giving a concrete realisation to the beautiful plans.

But I must warn you to be patient because all that may take more time than you expect.

However, there is also a joy in waiting, the joy of expectation.

With all my love.”

On 21-6-65 the Mother wrote to me:

“My dearest little child Huta,

With your Rs. 500 of today I have started a purse on which is written: ‘Huta—Auroville’. So little by little the money will collect.

In your yesterday’s letter you spoke of a dream of your childhood, ‘the most beautiful spot of the world.’

This was also a dream of my childhood. So our dreams have met for realisation.

Now it is only to be worked out. When we know how to wait, we put time on our side.

LOVE.”

Later the Mother told Navajata, M. André and some others that I had received the correct vision.

On 23rd June 1965 the Mother wrote:

“My dearest little child Huta,

Your letter is *very nice*. On 25th I shall show you my plan of Auroville.”

So on 25th after our work on *Savitri* she opened her diary in which she had kept all my letters. There were also a few blank sheets of paper. She drew several sketches in front of me and explained in detail the whole plan of the Mother’s pavilion and Auroville.

Then with a smile she lifted my chin and looked deeply into my eyes and said sweetly:

“And you will be the guardian of the Mother’s Shrine. Your tiny house in a shape of a lotus bud will be on the island very close to my house.”

I was amazed and looked at her smiling face. My eyes filled with tears of gratitude. She put all the sketches back into her diary and while holding my letters she remarked:

“Look! all these letters of yours have started the Mother’s Shrine.”

As a matter of fact, the wonderful plan had already been made by the Supreme Lord and the Supreme Mother. I was no more than a mere instrument.

Two of the Mother’s original sketches of her Shrine and Auroville are with me. They were given by the Mother.

I never stopped dreaming about the New World—especially the Mother’s Shrine. I felt the Supreme Truth was going to be invoked in the Truth Pavilion or the Mother’s Shrine and I must prepare myself. I asked the Mother what virtue one should possess in order to be worthy of being a guardian of the Mother’s shrine. She replied on 1-3-1966:

“Very dear little child Huta,

The pure love from your heart and soul is all that is required to make you worthy of being the guardian of the Truth Pavilion.

LOVE ”

Here I may mention that the precise name was not yet given to the Centre, so the Mother sometimes called it the Truth Pavilion or simply Pavilion or else the Mother’s Shrine. Much later the name Matrimandir was given to the place by the Mother.

There is no end to the beautiful reveries which I had been having ever since my childhood. Suddenly I felt uneasy. I wrote to the Mother that I aspired sincerely to serve the Truth and Love, but some people might not like the idea of my being the guardian of the Truth Pavilion. She answered on 12-3-66:

“My very dear little child Huta,

Fear not. The Lord is not influenced by what people say or desire. You will be the guardian of the Pavilion as decided.

LOVE.”

*

On 13th March 1966 late at night, I was strongly inspired to do a painting. I felt within me that the Mother had sent her inspiration and vision to me, and I must do something. I got up from my bed and did the painting. But I did not know what it represented, so the next morning I sent it to the Mother. She disclosed:

“My very dear little child Huta,

The painting is pretty and the inspiration good. It is the Spirit of Auroville that you wanted to express? When looking at the picture I had this feeling.

With all my love.”

The Mother wrote on a separate piece of paper:

“The Spirit of Auroville.”

I was astonished, because I did not know anything except that I had followed the inspiration.

On 19-3-66 the exhibition of Auroville was declared open in the house where now Purna Prema (the Mother’s grand-daughter) resides. I framed the picture and sent it to the Mother. She wrote:

“The picture looks quite nice in the frame It is already at the exhibition.”

For almost one and a half years the painting remained where it had been put. Then, unhappily, it was removed from there by an American, William Netter, who really did not know what he was doing. He did not realise the occult truth behind the picture Alas!

When I took the painting to the Mother, she was extremely sad and asked me to keep it with the paintings of *Savitri* in Golconde.

*

Much later the Mother gave through me the painting of “The Spirit of Auroville” to Laljibhai She wrote:

“Laljibhai,

I think this painting will be quite appropriate in your new office.

With love and blessings.”

When Laljibhai’s new office with this name—*Auroville Electronics and Allied Industries*—was opened on 15-6-1969 at 8.45 a.m., the painting was placed between the photographs of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Indeed, without the Spirit everything is lifeless. This applies to each and every case—whatever we execute. And “The Spirit of Auroville” reflected the Mother’s own vision.

*

In March 1983 the painting was given back to me by my nephew—Suresh—in a totally ruined condition. Rain-water and mildew had worked havoc with it. I had a terrible shock. But, then I felt that the situation of Auroville was in a confusion.

The picture of “The Spirit of Auroville” remained in my apartment for a

month. Then I tried to remove the stains with turpentine. The painting had become so brittle that it broke into shreds. The one surprising thing was that only the tiny face of the "Spirit" had survived the damage. So I cut it out very carefully and put it in a red plastic box and placed it in my Meditation Room near Sri Aurobindo's photograph. Later the box was placed on the Mother's chair in the Mother's room upstairs in the Ashram building. Now the box is with the *Savitri*-paintings in Golconde.

Afterwards I was inspired to do a new painting of "The Spirit of Auroville". On 9th April 1983 I took a canvas board and held it forth towards the Mother's photograph in my Meditation Room and prayed to her ardently:

"O Mother, if the Spirit is still there, let it manifest on this new canvas board."

And lo! within two hours without any preliminary drawing a picture took shape as if the Spirit were emerging from the board. I had only to follow what was shown to me. The whole work was done in a sweep, not needing the slightest alteration. My hand felt possessed by the Divine Force as it moved.

After finishing the painting I offered it to the Mother's photograph. The eyes in the photograph were as if living, laughing, moving. This was the Victory of the Mother!

The entire work was done in an inexpressible serenity. It was an extraordinary experience.

The picture went to the Mother's room also. Now "The Spirit of Auroville" is with the *Savitri*-paintings in Golconde.

The "Spirit" which has now manifested in the new picture is the destiny of the true Auroville which will be realised.

I had touched oil colours and brushes after sixteen years. I was not certain whether my hand would be steady. But to my amazement it was much steadier than before. All is the Mother's Grace and Love.

*

Caught in our human nature I was not yet convinced about the Mother's supreme Vision. Everything seemed to me a dream. I expressed my feeling to the Mother. She gave me assurance on 20-5-1966:

"My very dear little child Huta,

You say that Auroville is a 'dream'. Yes it is a 'dream' of the Lord and generally these 'dreams' turn out to be *true*, much more true than the human so-called reality!

With all my love."

On 16-2-1968 I met the Mother in the morning. After our work on *Savitri* she went into a deep trance. When she came out of it, she told me everything in detail about the Matrimandir and the twelve gardens.

It was amazing, because I had not mentioned the rumour that instead of the Matrimandir there would be a small lotus and nothing else. Then I told the Mother about the rumour. She said gravely:

“Yes, nasty people speak against the Truth.”

*

On the Mother’s birthday, 21-2-1968, I went to her in the afternoon. She gave me a silver-coloured blessing-packet along with this message:

“The best way to hasten the manifestation of the Divine’s Love is to collaborate for the triumph of the Truth.”

—The Mother

She smiled and said:

“Child, the continuation of this message will be on 29th.”

Not once but repeatedly the Mother told me and wrote to me about Truth and Love. As a matter of fact, the whole theme of the Matrimandir is TRUTH and LOVE. From the spiritual and occult point of view the Mother had revealed to me many things which cannot be expressed through mere words.

On 28-2-1968 the foundation stone of the Matrimandir was laid at 10 a.m. It was a Wednesday.

I did not go to the Centre, but sitting on a terrace near the Mother’s room I listened to the Mother’s Message when it was relayed:

1. Auroville belongs to nobody in particular. Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole. But to live in Auroville one must be a willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.
2. Auroville will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress and a youth that never ages.
3. Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future. Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within. Auroville will boldly spring towards future realisation.

4. Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual human unity.

THE MOTHER

The following day the Mother asked me:

“Child, did you go there?”

I answered: “No, Mother.” She raised her eyebrows. I said that she herself had told me that there would be a huge crowd, and it would be better if I did not go. She smiled and said:

“Oh, everything went on wonderfully.”

I said: “Mother, I am very happy. Let your Will be done.” She nodded and handed me the Message of the 29-2-1968—a continuation of the Message of the 21st:

“Truth alone can give to the world the power of receiving and manifesting the Divine’s Love.”

Here are three of the Mother’s writings which appeal to me very much:

“Matrimandir wants to be the symbol of the Divine’s answer to man’s aspiration for perfection.”

“The Ashram is the central consciousness. Auroville is one of the outward expressions. In both places equally the work is done for the Divine.”

“The Ashram will retain its true role of pioneer, inspirer and guide. Auroville is the attempt towards collective realisation.”

(To be continued)

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VYASA'S TALE OF SAVITRI IN THE MAHABHARATA

A VERSE-BY-VERSE RENDERING INTO ENGLISH

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1993)

62. After the departure of Yama, Savitri, on getting her husband back, came to the old place where her husband's body was lying dead.
63. She went near her husband when she saw him thus on the ground; then she sat there and took his head in her lap
64. On gaining his consciousness back he began talking to Savitri like one who had just returned from a journey abroad; he looked at her with affection, again and again.

Satyavan said:

65. Oh! for such a long time I have been sleeping and why is it that you did not wake me up? And where is that dark-hued Person who was dragging me with him?

Savitri said:

66. Yes, you have been sleeping in my lap for quite some time, my Lord; and that great God was Yama himself, the Ordainer of the Creatures, but he has now left.
67. O highly virtuous and holy, O Prince, you have taken good rest and you are full-awake; look, a thick dark night is gathering around us and hence, if you feel active and energetic, do get up.

Markandeya said:

68. Satyavan recovered his consciousness and got up, happy like a person after sound sleep; then on casting on the forest a glance in all directions he spoke:
69. To gather fruit I had come forth here, accompanied by you, O slender-waisted and graceful; but while chopping the wood I started getting a head-piercing ache.
70. With that agonising pain I was unable to stand any more and therefore laying my head in your lap I had slept; all this, O sweet and winsome, I remember now.

71. In this way soothed by the touch of your body as I slept, I lost all my awareness; then I saw a frightful darkness and soon a Person possessed of great splendour appeared there.
72. About it, O beautiful-bodied, if you know anything please tell me; tell whether it was a dream that I was seeing, or was it a reality?
73. Then Savitri replied: O Prince, as the night is advancing all around, I shall narrate in every respect the entire episode to you tomorrow.
74. Arise, O Suvrata, arise and let auspicious things happen to you; you must hasten to meet your parents, for the sun has already declined and the night is growing in darkness.
75. Those cruel-voiced prowlers of the night are moving freely now, and listen to the sound in the fallen leaves as the wild beasts go about.
76. This fearful howling of the jackals in the south and in the west is causing my mind and my heart to tremble.

Satyavan said:

77. This forest filled with a thick darkness appears to be very frightful; nor therein will you be able to know the path, nor walk.

Savitri said:

- 78: There was a wild fire in the forest and a dry tree is still burning; fanned by the wind the flames from it are seen now and then.
79. I shall go there and fetch some fire and light the way by burning the twigs lying all around; distress not yourself in the least.
80. But if you have no energy or inclination to walk or if you are not sure of the path in the forest filled with darkness,
81. Then, if you so desire, we shall return in the morning when we shall be able to see everything in the wood; if it is agreeable to you, O Sinless and Unblamable, we shall spend the night here.

Satyavan said:

82. Now the headache has disappeared and my body appears to be in a healthy state; I desire, with your kind graciousness, to return and meet my parents.

83. Never before did I reach the ashram at such an odd time in the evening; and my mother always forbids me going out after the twilight hour.
84. Even during the day whenever I go far away the elders get worried, afflicted; and my father, along with the ashram-dwellers, moves out in search of me.
85. Distressed in this manner, my parents have on several occasions censured me by saying that I return late quite often.
86. The plight in which they must be at present, that thought itself causes me great concern; not seeing me back they will surely be plunged in deep grief.
87. On one earlier occasion, the old parents grieved very much throughout the night, with tears flowing constantly; they expressed their loving affection for me again and again.
88. O dear son, not even for two hours can we remain alive without you; only that long is our life certain, O fond child, as you will hold yours.
89. Both of us are old and blind and you are our eyes' sight and it is through you that our lineage shall grow; our death-rites, fame and fortune of the family, the progeny and continuity, all depend upon you.
90. My mother is aged as also my father and I am like a staff in their hands. Seeing me not back in the night. into what sorrowing condition will they not fall?
91. I curse this sleep of mine, because of which my father as well as my mother, who never does wrong to me, must be now full of apprehensions of danger for me.
92. I am myself filled with doubt and in this difficult predicament do not know what I should do; without my father and my mother I cannot even remain alive.
93. Alarmed and troubled my blind father, whose intelligence is his only sight, must surely be going around, from one ashram-dweller to another, enquiring about me.
94. O splendid Lady, not so much am I concerned about myself as I am for my father and more for my mother who, feeble and frail, is an excellent companion and follower of her husband.

95. I shall prove to be the cause of their anguish today; it is in their living that I live and I die in their death.

96. It is my duty, I know, I should do what indeed pleases them and keeps them happy.

Markandeya said:

Thus saying he, that righteous soul, devout to the Teachers, and dear to them,

97. Started weeping aloud, filled with sorrow, and raising both his hands. Seeing her husband in grief, and broken down,

98. Savitri, the virtuous wife, wiped the tears from her own eyes and said: If at all I have done any hard austerities, given away sacred alms, or ever made proper fire-offerings,

99. Then by that merit let this night prove to my in-laws auspicious. If ever I have spoken playfully, or inadvertently, something that is not true, that I do not recollect.

100. By the strength of that truth, I know definitely that the in-laws are living.

Satyavan said:

101. Let us now return, O Savitri, eager as I am, and impatient, to meet my parents. (Moreover, I shall be seeing my revered Teachers too, dear to me as they are.)

O fair and beautiful Lady, should I see something disagreeable happen to my father and mother, I say truly that I myself shall not be living any more.

102. If your understanding is fixed in the dharma, if you desire me to be living, or if you take it as your duty to accept what is pleasing to me, then let us both return to the ashram immediately.

Markandeya said:

103. That virtuous woman Savitri then knotted her loose hair and, getting up, clasped both the hands of her husband, helping him to stand.

104. Satyavan also stood up and with one hand dusted his body; while looking around in all the directions he noticed the fruit-basket lying a little farther away.

105. But Savitri told him that the fruit-basket could be collected the next morning; however she wanted to carry his axe for safety and protection.
106. She tied the basket, filled with fruit, to the low branch of a nearby tree and, with the axe in her hand, went back where her husband was.
107. Taking her husband's left hand around her left shoulder, her own right hand encircling his waist, well-bosomed as she was and with the slow elegance of an elephant's gait, she started walking.

Satyavan said:

108. O timid Woman, by frequenting this region I have become quite familiar with the several paths here; looking simply at the stars through the branches of the trees I can identify them easily.
109. Indeed, this is the same path by which we came and along which we gathered fruit; O pretty and bright, follow that path and proceed without worrying about anything.
110. Near the group of palash-trees the path bifurcates and moves in two different directions; take the one which leads to the north, but now speed up.
111. I am in a good state of health and I have strength and I am anxiously desirous of seeing my parents.

Markandeya said:

He then, saying so, started walking in great haste towards the ashram.

(To be continued)

R.Y. DESHPANDE

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of May 1993)

SRI Aurobindo wrote a series of articles titled 'A System of National Education' in the *Karmayogin* from February 12 to April 2, 1909. In these articles he discussed the problem of education in great detail and almost outlined a philosophy of National Education for modern Indians. According to him, the existing system of education has confused education with the acquisition of knowledge and interpreted the knowledge itself in a narrow and illogical sense.

Sri Aurobindo pointed out the clue to reform the existing system of education, which compelled the student to barter away the ancient glorious heritage and culture. He insisted on reviving as far as might be possible the authentic elements in our ancient education. He said: "What was the secret of that gigantic intellectuality, spirituality and superhuman moral force which we see pulsating in the Ramayana and Mahabharata, in the ancient philosophy, in the supreme poetry, art, sculpture and architecture of India? What was at the basis of the incomparable public works and engineering achievement, the opulent and exquisite industries, the great triumphs of science, scholarship, jurisprudence, logic, metaphysics, the unique social structure? What supported the heroism and self-abandonment of the Kshatriya, the Sikh and the Rajput, the unconquerable national vitality and endurance? What was it that stood behind that civilisation second to none, in the massiveness of outlines or the perfection of its details? Without a great and unique discipline involving a perfect education of soul and mind, a result so immense and persistent would have been impossible."¹

This discipline built up the reservoir of vital energy by Brahmacharya, that alone could have upheld those superstructures in the realm of Matter, Thought and Spirit. Brahmacharya sought to "raise up the physical to spiritual", and it gradually perfected the instruments of knowledge. Sri Aurobindo has explained the process in the following words: "The practice of Brahmacharya is the first and most necessary condition of increasing the force within and turning it to such uses as may benefit the possessor or mankind. All human energy has a physical basis. The mistake made by European materialism is to suppose the basis to be everything and confuse it with the source. The source of life and energy is not material but spiritual, but the basis, the foundation on which the life and energy stand and work, is physical. The ancient Hindu clearly recognised this distinction between *kāraṇa* and *pratiṣṭhā*, the north pole and the south pole of being. Earth or gross matter is the *pratiṣṭhā*, Brahman or spirit is the *kāraṇa*."² Sri Aurobindo was also careful to add that such a perfect deployment of one's faculties was "only possible to the Yogin by a successful prosecution of the discipline of Yoga."³

Brahmacharya is the starting point, but Yoga was the means to the finality of fulfilment. On these two poles did the ancient Hindus raise their system of knowledge, the methods of education and the experiment in civilization.

Sri Aurobindo further wrote: "The highest creative intellects in Europe have achieved sovereignty by limitation, by striving to excel only in one field of a single intellectual province or at most in two; when they have been versatile it has been by sacrificing height to breadth. But in India it is the greatest who have been the most versatile and passed from one field of achievement to another without sacrificing an inch of their height or an iota of their creative intensity, easily, unflinchingly, with an assured mastery. This easy and unfailing illumination crowning the unflinching energy created by Brahmacharya was due to the discipline which developed *sattva* or inner illumination. This illumination makes the acquisition of knowledge and all other intellectual operations easy, spontaneous, swift, decisive and comparatively unfatiguing to body or brain. In these two things lies the secret of Aryan intellectual achievement. Brahmacharya and *sattwic* development created the brain of India: it was perfected by Yoga."⁴ Sri Aurobindo did not say that the old Brahmacharyayoga axis could be reproduced in the twentieth century, but it can be modified and adopted.

Sri Aurobindo diagnosed the evils of the British system of education in India. He wanted to bring reforms by introducing and planning for the New National Education and he entertained such high hopes from it that it was hardly to be wondered at that he was not altogether satisfied with the actual functioning of National Education. These National institutions were not numerous enough, and they really cut themselves free from the evils of the old system and they had not enough finance to manage the situation.

He gave his own comments in the following terms: "If it could not triumphantly succeed, that was partly because it had to deal with minds already vitiated by the old system and not often with the best even of these, because its teachers had themselves seldom a perfect grasp of the requirements of the new system, and because its controllers and directors were men of the old school who clung to familiar shibboleths and disastrous delusions. But in the system itself there was a defect, which, though it would matter less in other epochs or other countries, is of primary importance in such periods of transition when bricks have to be made out of straw and the work now done will determine the future achievement of our nation. While calling itself national, it neglected the very foundation of the great achievement of our forefathers and especially the perfection of the instrument of knowledge."⁵

He observed further: "The National Council of Education, as it is at present composed, has convicted itself of entire incapacity whether to grasp the meaning of the movement or to preserve or create the conditions of its success. To the majority of the members it is merely an interesting academical experiment... To others the only valuable part of it is the technical instruction given in its

workshops. The two or three who at all regard it as part of a great national movement, are unnerved by fear, scepticism and distrust and, by introducing the principles of Chanakya into its public policy, are depriving it of the first condition of its continued existence.”⁶

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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- 1 *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 3, p 331
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SHAKESPEARE IN THE LIGHT OF SANSKRIT POETICS

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1993)

ACT II of *Othello* opens with a *prakārī*—the conversation among Montano and others. Cassio's description of Desdemona serves as *bindu*, bringing us back to the main action. His prayers for Othello's safety once more reveal the under-current of *sambhoga śrngāra* in one intense line: "Make love's quick parts in Desdemona's arms" (II 1. 80)

With the arrival of Desdemona, *śrngāra* definitely establishes its supremacy. Though the conversation is light-hearted, we know that she is eagerly awaiting news of Othello's safety, and as soon as he arrives *śrngāra* in its *sambhoga* aspect overwhelms us:

O my soul's joy!
If after every tempest come such calms
May the winds flow till they have waken'd death!...

If it were now to die
'Twere now to be most happy....
I cannot speak enough of this content,
It stops me here, it is too much of joy!¹⁶

Othello is the *āśraya*, Desdemona the *ālambana* and the circumstances of Othello's safe return, their meeting—all these serve as *uddīpanā*. The nature of *śrngāra* here is *manjisthā śrngāra*, since it expresses itself in a richly demonstrative manner, through magnificent poetry, embraces and kisses.¹⁷ The reader or spectator experiences the intensity of this *rasa* in all its manifold beauty. One's enjoyment is not hampered by the fact that Othello is a Moor and Desdemona a Venetian lady. They, for the moment, are two universalized lovers. The reader is uplifted to the plane of a *rasa*-experience that, according to Abhinavagupta, is like the bliss of experiencing union with Brahman.

It may be remarked in passing that it is the purpose of this essay to study the *rasa*-experience vouchsafed to us, not to study dramaturgy. Therefore no attention has been given to the plot. It is only incidentally that terms like *patākā*, etc. have been used, to facilitate our study. It will be carrying enthusiasm too far to apply Sanskrit dramaturgy to the plot of a Jacobean play.

The ensuing dialogue that concludes the scene can hardly be credited with the creation of any *rasa*. There are certain emotions exhibited in it: amused contempt for Roderigo, the reader's shocked surprise at Iago's machinations, etc. Disgust, the *sthāyī* (permanent emotion) of *bibhatsa* (the odious) is the chief emotion generated by Iago's speech, but this disgust is a strictly abstract affair,

since it is generated not by the sight or smell of any concrete disgusting object but by the treacherous contemptible words of Iago. In *Nāṭyadarpaṇa* Ramachandra-Gunachandra discuss the mental aspect of this rasa, as differentiated from the sensual one. There is no other scholarly discussion of this aspect of *bibhatsa* rasa and thus one hesitates to ascribe the evocation of this rasa here.

The dramatic scene resulting in Cassio's dismissal is in the nature of *patākā* since it is intimately connected with the main action. There is much fighting here, but instead of evoking *raudra* (the furious) rasa it can be more properly said to evoke *hāsya*. There is a better evocation of *raudra* in the passage spoken by Othello:

My blood begins my safer guides to rule;
And passion, having my best judgement collid,
Assays to lead the way.¹⁸

The entrance of Desdemona once more produces *śṛṅgāra* for a very short time. Cassio's self-contempt once more makes us hesitate between bhava and rasa for, in addition to our recognition of Cassio's feelings, we are swayed by pity for him. Both of these emotions remain emotions and do not attain rasahood. It will perhaps be more proper to say that here we have the *vyabhicārī* (transitory) emotion of *nirveda* (despair).

Act III begins with a short scene between Cassio and the clown—a scene too short to evoke *hāsya* properly. The dialogue between Othello and Desdemona has a strong undercurrent of *śṛṅgāra*. This rasa comes to the foreground and leaps up into glorious flame in the lines:

Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul
But I do love thee! and when I love thee not
Chaos is come again.¹⁹

Here, once more, we have the true essence of *śṛṅgāra* engulfing us, with Othello as the *āśraya*, Desdemona the *ālambana* and their conversation the *uddīpana*.

When, after this, Iago starts poisoning Othello's mind, we are shocked and horrified. There is disgust and anxiety in our minds, and jealousy is evoked in Othello by carefully manipulating his love. The excruciatingly moving self-demigration of Othello:

Haply, for I am black
And have not those soft parts of conversation
That chamberers have, or for I am declined
Into the vale of years²⁰

plunges the reader into pity for him. All the time, however, the murmurous waters of *śrngāra* wash over this and the ensuing scene, when the all-important handkerchief is lost. This token or *abhigñāna* spells disaster, leading to the tragic end. Several *vyabhicārī* emotions come into play here, we have Iago's satisfaction at having achieved his goal of obtaining the handkerchief, his anticipation of future pleasure in planting it on Cassio, his fiendish smugness at the sight of Othello in the mandragora speech.²¹

Othello is suffering from deep depression. The *vyabhicārī* emotions of *nirveda* (despair), disgust, jealousy, fear are raging in chaotic confusion within him. So miserable is his condition that the splendid passage beginning "Farewell the tranquil mind" instead of creating *vīra* (the heroic), generates *karuṇa* rasa. As the scene proceeds despair gives way to *amaṛṣa* (vengefulness):

O that the slave had forty thousand lives,
One is too poor, too weak for my revenge.²²

This long scene (III. iv.) evokes many different rasas, though *śrngāra* is the predominating one, in an indirect manner. Othello's demand to see the handkerchief, his obvious jealousy, are the *anubhāvas* of his love. A relief from these intense and distressing events is offered in the dialogue between Cassio and Bianca. *Śrngāra* is the prevailing rasa here with Bianca as the *āśraya*, Cassio the *ālambana*, and the circumstances of their unexpected meeting the *uddipana*.

The raging conflict in Othello's mind reaches its climax in the first scene of the next act. We have a discussion first, an argument which can be termed a *vitarka* (included within *vyabhicārī* emotions). In the disjointed speech:

What? what—Handkerchief—confessions. Noses,
ears and lips—Is it possible? confess—Handkerchief! O devil!²³

he falls into a trance. In other words we have *apasmāra* and *moha*, two of the *vyabhicārīs* listed by Dhananjaya. The sequence between Iago and Cassio with Othello looking on from a distance exercises the scope of dramatic irony to the full. When looked at from our point of view, it excites scorn, disgust and repulsion thus creating *bibhatsa* rasa. It is rather difficult to analyse the components of a situation that creates *bibhatsa*, but here it can be said that Othello is the *āśraya*, Cassio the *ālambana*, and his gestures and smile, the handkerchief itself in Bianca's possession, comprise the *uddipana*.

Directly after the exit of Cassio, Othello advances and says: "How shall I murder him, Iago?" This *amaṛṣa* of Othello, the gestures that accompany it, are the *anubhāvas*. All the time it must not be forgotten that in the dialogue between Iago and Cassio (unheard by Othello) it is *śrngāra* that is in open evidence. Here we have a case of some nicety—since according to *rasavāda*, *śrngāra* and *bi-*

bhatsa cannot co-exist. Here the *rasa*-experience takes place on several different levels. Thus for Othello and the audience we have *bibhatsa* *rasa* as explained earlier, but for Cassio we have *śrngāra*, with himself as the *āśraya*, Bianca as *ālambana* and Iago's words the *uddipana*. The one person unaffected by both the *rasas* is Iago. His malignity, however motiveless, is yet based on vindictiveness and contempt—two very strong *vyābhicārī* emotions. The concept of the co-existence of hate and love, so familiar to us from Catullus downwards, is entirely alien to *rasavada*, where *śrngāra* and *bibhatsa* are taken to be *rasas* that oppose each other²⁴ Modern scholars, who have come into contact with literature that highlights the tension between two different emotions, acknowledge the fact that in certain cases *rasas* that oppose each other can co-exist and enhance the beauty of the work²⁵ Thus in the dialogue between Othello and Iago we have *raudra* (the furious) *rasa* with Othello as the *āśraya* and Cassio as the *ālambana*, and again *karuṇa*: “the pity of it, Iago! O Iago, the pity of it ” All the time *śrngāra* runs alongside these two. Such a highly sophisticated mixture of different emotions and consequently of different *rasas* is the hallmark of Shakespeare. Who but he can hold out to us a chalice full of the fiery mixture of so many *rasas*?

The rest of the scene continues to give us a medley of different *rasas*. When Othello strikes Desdemona we realise that he has lost all control over himself. Lodovico, wonderingly remarking on this, doubts whether he is sane or not. The *vyābhicārī* emotions of *amarsa*, *asūyā*, *unmāda*, and the *anubhāva* of his gestures, his words, indicate the depths to which he has fallen.

The next scene, between Othello and Desdemona, again gives us a mixture of different *rasas*. We have *raudra* and *śrngāra* in Othello's anger and love and, above all, the audience is moved by pity for both. Again and again Othello's speeches give rise to *bibhatsa* *rasa*

as a cistern for foul toads
To knot and gender in!...

as summer flies are in the shambles
That quicken even with blowing²⁶

Othello is the *āśraya* of all these *rasas* and Desdemona the *ālambana*, Desdemona's supposed infidelity the *uddipana*. Yet, at times, there are lines of jewel-like lustre—“Patience, thou young and rose-lipped cherubin”—that concentrate *śrngāra* *rasa* in all its tender beauty. We have unmixed *karuṇa* after Othello's exit, with Desdemona's self-denigration.

'Tis meet I should be used so, very meet.
How have I been behaved, that he might stick
The small'st opinion on my least misuse?²⁷

When we come to the willow scene the delicate pastel beauty of it evokes a fine mixture of rasas. *Karuna* predominates, but *śrngāra* provides a soft background music since Desdemona is talking of her love all the time and, like a *bāsaka-sajjikā* heroine, preparing to receive Othello.

(*To be continued*)

RATRI RAY

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AND SO THIS HAPPENS

(Continued from the issue of May 1993)

'Now,' said the professor, 'let me take up the second machinery—*Administration*—that is to say, the State and its Policy. At present most of the political and social leaders of the world believe that it is Democratic Socialism that can cure all social ills if, of course, rightly operated. The Administration set up under this political ideal has the inherent strength to make the society free from the chronic malady of poverty and ensure its prosperity and progress.'

'It is true that no nation has yet been able to set up an administration to shape this ideal—Democratic Socialism or Socialistic Democracy—in its real form; for nations attempt at following the ideal without realising the significance of its attributes. Besides, Democracy and Socialism are two political ideals. Basically they are not coherent with each other. We must therefore examine how and why this combination was felt necessary for humanity's progress. Here we have to recapitulate the evolution of man's political progress as visioned by Sri Aurobindo to ascertain how ideals emerge in human thought, and Nature's intention behind them.

'Incidentally, we have already discussed the theory of evolution and come to understand that out of the animal appeared man. As an inheritor of the animal, man started living in groups, or we may say that his gregarious instinct impelled him to live in groups for the safety and security of his physical existence. With the unfolding of a higher consciousness in him he had to widen his group-existence, encompassing in it other groups. Thus we perceive that tribes, clans, principalities and small city-states, and ultimately nation-units came into being. And thus man has been progressing with the gradual enlargement of his group-living from the prehistoric time through the dark middle age to this dazzling era of modern science and technology. Now, the nation-unit is the largest form of human agglomeration. Thus the world today has been divided into numerous nation-states. In 1992 the UN had 170 member-states.

'With the enlargement of man's group-living he has to bring about changes in his administrative process and policies to cope with various types of problems mainly relating to his physical-vital existence. Meanwhile he has entered into the age of Reason, the age of revolt against all sorts of conventional beliefs and codes of life and the ignorant influence of the priests and the churches. Such a trend ultimately led people to a sanguinary battle against monarchism some 200 years ago. This is known as the French Revolution that has paved the way for a New Era to be ushered in. The Fall of the Bastille symbolises the abolition of monarchism, and a people's achievement of freedom to form their own government. Thus the idea of democracy in political administration has become operational.

‘The three ideals that inspired the people of France to plunge into battle to get rid of the tyranny of the monarchs and the rigid codes of the Church are, as we all know: Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Simultaneous effectuation of these three ideals in our social living is the sole way that leads to the ultimate destiny of our mundane existence.

‘Of course it is a fact that even after two hundred years of their emergence in human thought, these ideals remain unachieved by men because they have not been able to seize upon their inherent truth. Let us try to comprehend the inner significance of these ideals as explained by Sri Aurobindo in one of his speeches delivered in Calcutta in 1909.’

Here the professor drew out a big-sized diary from the cabinet, opened a page and started reading:

“There are three ideas which are of supreme moment to human life and have become watchwords of humanity, three words which have the power of moulding nations and government,—liberty, equality and fraternity. These words, cast forth into being from the great stir and movement of the eighteenth century, continue to act on man because they point to the ultimate goal towards which human evolution ever moves.”

‘But why do they still remain unachieved by man despite his marvellous progress in almost all the spheres of his outer existence?’—the editor questioned.

With a smile the professor replied, ‘I have got something more to explain in the light of Sri Aurobindo. You will surely get your answer when I finish.

‘The first ideal is *liberty* which means liberation out of a state of bondage. By bondage we generally mean political, economic and social bondage of our outer life only; we do not take into account that there is also an inner bondage—our physical, vital and mental nature. Therefore the deepest meaning of this ideal is the power to expand and grow towards perfection by the law of one’s own nature.

‘The next ideal is *equality*. This is an essential condition of emancipation as set forward by our religions and philosophies. All religions send us this message in different forms: Christianity says—we are all brothers,—children of one God. We are all servants and subjects of one Allah—says Mohammedanism. And Hinduism states—all living beings are one family.

‘So, you understand, my friend, that “equality” of the triple gospel is not something achievable by equitable distribution of national wealth; nor can it be established in human society through removal of economic disparity between the “haves” and the “have nots”. Its deepest meaning is the progressive harmonised growth of both the individual and the society. Though originally the two ideals—liberty and equality—were individualistic, yet it is a fact that man cannot actually live as an isolated being nor can he grow by an isolated freedom. He

grows by his relation with others and his freedom must exercise itself in a progressive self-harmonising with the freedom of his fellow beings in the society. If the individual's relation with his fellow beings is founded upon a solid basis of fraternity then there is a chance of a progressive harmonised growth of both the individual and the society. Here lies the real significance of the third gospel—fraternity—which has so finely been explained by Sri Aurobindo:

“It is the last term of the gospel towards which all religions call and human aspirations rise. There is discord in life, but mankind yearns for peace and love. This is the reason why the gospels which preach brotherhood spread quickly and excite passionate attachment.... This is the essence of humanitarianism, the modern gospel of love for mankind. It is the nature, the *dharma* of humanity that it should be unwilling to stand alone. Every man seeks the brotherhood of his fellows and we can only live by fraternity with others. Through all the differences and discords humanity is striving to become one.”

‘Now coming to your question, I should like to say that the human attempt failed because the world was not ready on one hand and on the other the attempts were imperfect and made for limited fulfilment.

‘Let me explain the attempts. We took Liberty as the foundation of Democracy. We tried Socialism to accomplish Equality. And Fraternity!—we haven't yet claimed it to be a practicable principle in the ordering of life. It is very difficult for us to realise what brotherhood is. Yet Fraternity is the key. It has to be awakened to achieve real liberty and equality in our social existence; for without it man as a social being can never become perfect nor can his society prosper and progress. Brotherhood is the source of love and without love the divinity in man cannot be awakened. So, it is brotherhood that alone can ensure humanity's further progress from the skeptic age of reason swinging between darkness and light to the ever-luminous age of Truth and Spirituality.

‘It is understood that democracy is necessary because it provides each individual with the *freedom* needed for his inner development; and socialism is necessary because it provides *equality* among individuals and helps develop the individual's feeling for his fellow men. But democratic socialism as practised here and elsewhere fails because it is not founded upon ‘brotherhood’.

‘The idea of democracy or democratic socialism which we practise is an outcome of European political thought. Though the idea is proved to be an ignorant distortion of the ideals of the French Revolution, yet it helps a state to develop so far as its outer existence is concerned but surely fails to bring about any change in the inner life of its individuals which is essential for its real progress and prosperity.’

The professor paused

The editor had been listening to the professor with unfaltering attention. The topic itself as well as his organised method of presentation deeply amazed him; yet he felt uneasy because it seemed to him that the discourse was too academic to be appreciated by the youth. But he could not express his feeling; he was hesitating. He stopped the recorder and looked helplessly at the professor.

The professor could read his mind through his eyes. Yet with a bit of diffidence he said, 'Perhaps you are thinking: who cares for all these dry and apparently impracticable theories? Everyone wants immediate direct action. I'm quite aware of it; so I can understand your difficulty. But you assured me that my recorded talks would appear in two or more instalments in your daily after the publication of the result of your appraisal. And I thought this was a grand opportunity for me to introduce Sri Aurobindo to the youth of these days of unrest grown out of uncertainties. I strongly feel that the time has come when they must realise his relevance. The topic is the burning problem of the day and these youngsters are its helpless victims. The whole situation appears to me to be very conducive to what I intend to do. For I strongly believe that they are groping, but there is no beacon to guide them. And that is why I'm so elaborative. There is no doubt that if they receive the touch they will be changed. They will no longer be carried away by the 'philosophy of immediate action', nor will they indulge in any programme of self-abnegation. And thereby I'm sure the society can be saved from these sorts of perilous ills.'

'That I admit, sir. But I'm doubtful whether they are in the habit of reading anything so serious,'—with a hesitant voice argued the editor. 'It is we who often say that on them depends the future, but are they themselves aware of it? Excuse me, sir, but I don't believe that they are.'

'And that is our error, a serious lapse on our part,'—the professor asserted—'We do not know that we are incapable of rightly judging them; we cannot understand them; yet we infer, we comment. This is due to the generation-gap, they say; and that gap is ever widening. And that is why we do not know what they want, how far they are ready, and how serious they are.' After a little pause he continued, 'Since you are a journalist you are in a better position to have information with regard to the present-day cultural, social and political phenomena. Most of the youth, so far as I know, have become intolerant of their elders in all these fields. It is these elders who say that they are insolent, disobedient and disrespectful. To me it seems to be the same situation as history witnessed when Reason started questioning Convention. If you study them a wee bit deeply you may find that they want to bring about a change, a total breakthrough, but they are yet to seize on the definite idea of what should be the new set-up and how it has to be made operational. From that viewpoint, I think they are to be regarded as the forerunners of some incipient ideas that are necessary for the progress of the entire humanity. So, you may rest assured that your endeavour will bear fruit. And that is what we want at the present moment.'

‘Yes, sir, your explanation is indeed very educative. We are too pragmatic to realise all these deeper aspects of issues that we discuss off and on.’ Saying this, the editor switched on the recorder and the professor continued: ‘Perhaps many of us do not know; and many do but do not believe that Socialism is essentially an Asiatic and especially an Indian and not an European idea. “What is called Socialism in Europe”—says Sri Aurobindo—“is the old Asiatic attempt to effect a permanent solution of the economic problem of society which will give man leisure and peace to develop undisturbed his higher self. Without Socialism democracy would remain a tendency that never reached its fulfilment.... Socialistic democracy is the only true democracy”¹⁵ Sri Aurobindo therefore advocates that the democratic principle and the methods of Europe have to be learnt so that we may be able to build up something more suited to our past and the future of humanity. For this purpose he suggests that we have to throw out the individualism and materialism of the European idea and keep the democracy. We have always to remember that it is we who have to solve for the human race the problem of harmonising and spiritualising the impulses towards liberty, equality and fraternity. “As in politics so in commerce,” Sri Aurobindo indicates, “we must learn and master the European methods in order that we may eventually rise above them.”¹⁶ In this context he has revealed the psychological truths of our social development in such a way that it would stir the thinking minds of the present-day world as well. A single sentence, very simple, upholds the profound Truth that may unfailingly guide the perplexed nations of the world. “*A nation need not be luxuriously wealthy in order to be profoundly artistic...*”¹⁷

‘All these Indian ideas and ideals have to be presented before the misguided youth of our country by the people who are at the helm of affairs or through education, in such a way that they feel enthused to develop their faculty of original thinking which is a necessity in this present period of transition.’

The editor looked very keen. The professor felt encouraged and said, ‘There is another reason for which I have to explain the Indian idea of socialism. At present the question which has raised its head and stood in the way of our progress is whether India will be rationalised and industrialised like the West and lose her own identity, or the spiritual motive which India represents will prevail on Europe and create there new forms congenial to the West. Will humanity be governed by the Western ideas of commercialism based on scientific materialism or by the lofty and luminous ideals of the East based on spiritual knowledge? That is to say, who is to guide bewildered humanity,—the West, the East, or the two together? This is the single radical and poignant question at issue which has to be clearly understood and answered.

‘Perhaps I’m not wrong in my assumption that the present-day Indian mind is convinced that India has to be industrialised and commercialised like the developed countries of the West if she intends to survive and progress in this

modern world dominated by material science and technology. The youth of India who are to build a New India must think over this important issue very seriously or else they will not be able to determine the right way to India's real progress. Do they want India to become one more nation among so many nations in the world? Would it then be a real gain to the world or to us? Would it not be a tragic irony of fate if India were to throw away her spiritual heritage at the very moment when the rest of the world is turning towards her with growing zeal and eagerness for spiritual help and the saving Light?"

Then the professor stated, 'Of course it is true that the East has always and increasingly put the highest emphasis on the supreme truth of the Spirit and that in its extreme philosophies it has put the world away as an illusion and regarded the Spirit as the sole reality. The West, on the other hand, has concentrated increasingly on the world, that is to say, its material existence; in modern times it has denied the Spirit and enthroned Matter as the sole reality

'Sri Aurobindo in his message to America given on the occasion of his birth-anniversary on August 15, 1949 has analysed these two extreme phenomena and commented, "Yet both are truth and can be regarded as part of the intention of the Spirit in world-nature; they are not incompatible with each other: rather their divergence has to be healed and both have to be included and reconciled in our view of the future."

'It is by this reconciliation,'—continued the professor—'that humanity's real progress towards its destiny can be ensured. So, you understand, my friend, that the twain must meet.'

'Now let me read out another passage from Sri Aurobindo. I do not know whether you've gone through it. However, let me remain silent as to when it was written. You are to ascertain it if you can. I may apprise you of this afterwards. Please listen:

"We shall review European civilisation entirely from the standpoint of Indian thought and knowledge and seek to throw off from us the dominating stamp of the Occident; what we have to take from the West we shall take as Indians. And the *dharma* once discovered, we shall strive our utmost not only to profess but to live it, in our individual actions, in our social life, in our political endeavours.

"We say to the individual and especially to the young who are now arising to India's work, the world's work, God's work,—'You cannot cherish these ideas, still less can you fulfil them if you subject your minds to European ideas or look at life from the material standpoint. Materially you are nothing, spiritually you are everything. It is only the Indian who can believe everything, dare everything, sacrifice everything. First, therefore, become Indians. Recover the patrimony of your forefathers. Recover the Aryan thought, the Aryan discipline, the Aryan character, the Aryan life.. "'18'

‘Excuse me’—said the editor abruptly. ‘We were discussing how the administration can be made effective to bring about the necessary change in the society to save the youth from this ruinous degeneration.’

‘Yes, we have already indicated that any change in the outer machinery—social, political, economic, educational or even religious—cannot change the man. It is the individual who has to change himself. So, those who are at the helm of affairs cannot deliver if they themselves remain unchanged. Now I’m talking about a change from within and not from without. Whatever the ideal may be,—Socialism, Democracy, Democratic Socialism, if it is to yield the needed result, to ensure real progress and prosperity of the human race then it has to be given shape by persons who are themselves perfect. If you look around the world you find that the nations are led by quasi-intellectual leaders who are not themselves guided by their own inner Light. They have no vision of the future. To this fact I intend to draw the attention of the youth so that they may not be misled by the unscrupulous leaders and can avoid eventual fall on the way. They must be aware of the Animal that dwells within each of us and rightly know all about the way which they have to follow in order to attain to manhood, and ultimately to awaken divinity. This is man’s real business in the world.

‘Now a question may be raised,—“Is there any necessity of spiritual knowledge in politics?” For the purpose of all the ideas of Socialism, Capitalism, Democracy, Democratic Socialism, etc. is to upgrade our mundane existence, whereas spiritual knowledge helps man in his progress towards a world beyond. We think in this way because we have very shallow knowledge of our existence. And that is why we can neither discover the real cause of our problems nor determine the means of their right and radical solution. Life devoid of spiritual knowledge is not worth living so far as the human being is concerned. Our thinking mind cannot go beyond what it seizes on through the senses. That is why we have failed to realise the innate truth of the three ideals of the French Revolution. And therefore their simultaneous effectuation in our socio-political and socio-economic existence was not possible. Let me quote again Sri Aurobindo, as his explanation is more penetrating: “Freedom, equality, brotherhood are three godheads of the soul, they cannot be really achieved through the external machinery of society or by man so long as he lives in the individual and the communal ego.”¹⁹ This is from *The Ideal of Human Unity*. Then we come to understand that these ideals are not political slogans; they are godheads of the soul. From this explanation it is understood that a mighty Force,—you may call it God or Supernature or something else—is working in the world for the fulfilment of Its own purpose through World-Nature. Humanity cannot remain outside Its scope. So, we are expected to know the truth of our existence, as also what destiny we are to reach. Here lies the necessity of spiritual knowledge and culture without which our socio-economic life would lose its capacity of renewing itself to move on in the next cycle. You know that the life of the society like the physical life of the individual human being passes through a

cycle of birth, growth, youth, ripeness and decline. But the society, that is to say, the collective being has too the capacity of renewing itself, of a recovery and a new cycle. That is why we see that all the older nations, except India and China, perished.

'Now let us come to the question which we were discussing—the triple ideals and their effectuation. It is implicit in Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the ideals that human society can be renewed or transformed through the right effectuation of the ideals so that it may suit the enlightened human race of the future. He has pointed out that fraternity is something deeper and greater than what is generally understood. In his own words, "But brotherhood exists only in the soul and by the soul; it can exist by nothing else ... Yet is brotherhood the real key to the triple gospel of the idea of humanity. The union of liberty and equality can only be achieved by the power of human brotherhood and it cannot be founded on anything else."²⁰

'Hence the necessity of spiritual knowledge for effectively running the political machinery.' The professor paused for some time. Meanwhile the editor set a new cassette and looked at the professor. At once the latter started: 'Now we have completed our discussion on two instruments—Education and Administration. Perhaps your general readers will be able to comprehend that if we change the system of education and administration on the basis of our mental ideas without knowing fully well the aim of evolution, and hope that through that change we may be able to get rid of the present predicament of man, then assuredly it can be said that sooner or later we shall realise that we are running after a mirage.'

(To be continued)

SAMAR BASU

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THE YOGA OF LEARNING SANSKRIT

A REPORT BY WILFRIED

WHEN I wrote to Vyaas Houston, Director of the American Sanskrit Institute, requesting him to send me whatever material might be helpful for writing this article, he responded very soon. I received a copy of his Newsletter, the text of his interview with *Yoga International* and his compilation titled “What is Sanskrit”.¹

I first read the interview in which a number of interesting points are discussed with great clarity and style. Just take, for example, Houston’s response to the question as to what he means by resonance (to which he refers very often) and why it is so important: “All language creates vibration and resonance, but Sanskrit allows you to vibrate to the maximum, to vibrate as much as it is possible to vibrate using a language. By chanting Sanskrit, you set up vibrations through which you can expand into the universe. And the response that comes back is a dialogue between your body and what’s outside your body. Ultimately, you come to realize that all vibration and resonance are one.” (...)

Houston points out in the interview that he teaches Sanskrit “for the sake of healing”. All suffering resides in the mind, he says, and Sanskrit “reconverts the mind into pure energy. Another name for this process is Yoga. (...) For me, Sanskrit and yoga are one and the same.” And this highly developed language with its special qualities can only be properly learned by applying the principles of yoga to classroom teaching. There must be no stress of comparing oneself with others, of “getting it right” or “getting it wrong”, but a yogic attitude and atmosphere of mutual support. In fact, he has developed a whole philosophy of teaching the language—not without success: during the past two years, he has had 700 students, either directly through total immersion courses or indirectly through his specially prepared courses with cassettes.

Next I opened his “Collection of essays, articles and quotes on Sanskrit” and found a long quotation from Sri Aurobindo right on the first page, a text very well chosen from *The Foundations of Indian Culture*.² In this quotation Sri Aurobindo points out that the Sanskrit language is “one of the most magnificent, the most perfect and wonderfully sufficient literary instruments developed by the human mind...”³ The same quotation is given once more on p. 5 of his essay “Sanskrit and the Technological Age—Mathematics, Music, and Sanskrit.” Here Houston writes: “Why has Sanskrit endured? Fundamentally it generates clarity and inspiration. And that clarity and inspiration is directly responsible for

¹ Available at \$ 6 (plus mailing) from The American Sanskrit Institute, 73 Four Corners Rd., Warwick, N Y 10990

² Pondicherry 1975, p. 255

³ The complete text is given in an Appendix to this report

a brilliance of creative expression such as the world has rarely seen. No one has expressed this more eloquently than Sri Aurobindo, the 20th century poet philosopher:..."

Houston makes some general remarks on Sanskrit as the language of mantra and its great sound value. Listening to it or speaking it produces joy, and yet even in India, he says, the common attitude is "it's too difficult". As so many other enthusiasts, Houston maintains that "actually Sanskrit is not difficult. On the contrary, there are few greater enjoyments." Through his own methods the learner is to be given a maximum of support and motivation. "Such a method must take advantage of the fact that Sanskrit grammar is structured by precise patterns, and once a pattern has been noted it is a simple exercise to recognize all the individual instances that fit the pattern; rather than see the pattern after all the individual instances have been learned."

America is the country where the first computers were built and so Houston skillfully addresses the computer mind in his readers telling them that "the precision play of Sanskrit with computer tools will awaken the capacity in human beings to utilize their innate higher mental faculty with a momentum that would inevitably transform the world. In fact, the mere learning of Sanskrit by large numbers of people in itself represents a quantum leap in consciousness, not to mention the rich endowment it will provide in the arena of future communication." Houston had already referred on pp. 2-3 of this essay to the work done by NASA researcher Rick Briggs who had published an article on Sanskrit as the ideal computer language in *Artificial Intelligence Magazine* (Spring 1985). In this article Briggs had written:

"Among the accomplishments of the grammarians can be reckoned a method for paraphrasing Sanskrit in a manner that is identical not only in essence but in form with current work in Artificial Intelligence. This article demonstrates that a natural language can serve as an artificial language also, and that much work in AI has been reinventing a wheel millenia old."

AI research found that it is necessary to create "semantic net systems" to clear up the inherent ambiguity of natural languages for computer comprehension. In this system the actual "natural" language is restructured in such a way that it becomes entirely unambiguous. Most languages deviate considerably from the semantic net, but only Sanskrit has a deviation of zero. Houston repeats this fact in many variants in most of his essays. But we should clarify at this point that the clearness and unambiguity refer only to the structure as such. Otherwise, Sanskrit can be extremely difficult precisely because it is ambiguous due to the multi-meaning of words. In fact, this multi-meaning works out as an advantage in poetry, for instance, allowing the poet to communicate several suggestions through a single well-chosen word. Sri Aurobindo has pointed out in *The Secret of the Veda* how the words were originally more "open" in their significance, less strictly and narrowly confined to a concise meaning, which again can be of great

advantage in mystic language. Furthermore, we should remember that there were master kavis in later periods who could tell two entirely different stories in a single Sanskrit text. Every student opening a dictionary for the first time knows very well that one word can have so many significances. To remain objective, we should state that this aspect of Sanskrit would actually make it the most difficult for computers to translate. The nominal style with long compounds¹, whose individual elements the reader has to disentangle by establishing his own logical connections, would also be entirely inaccessible to computer programs. Nor do I consider that a disadvantage. Sanskrit is great in itself and does not become any greater by pleasing computer scientists. However, I agree with Houston that we can duly appreciate this aspect of the language.

A brief essay by K P Rajappan titled "Sanskrit for Computer Processing" published in the same compilation throws more light on this subject. It refers to the great merits of Panini and the long tradition of research in the area of Phonetics and Philosophy of language. Rajappan suggests that Shastric Sanskrit, the language used by early Indian grammarians in their famous works, might be an ideal *interlingua* or intermediate language in automatic computer translation processes.

(To be continued)

Appendix

Vyaas Houston in his compilation "What is Sanskrit" has given to the full text of the quotation from Sri Aurobindo special prominence by placing it in the middle of a type sheet size page, without any other text to go along with it:

The ancient and classical creations of the Sanskrit tongue both in quality and in body and abundance of excellence, in their potent originality and force and beauty, in their substance and art and structure, in grandeur and justice and charm of speech and in the height and width of the reach of their spirit stand very evidently in the front rank among the world's great literatures. The language itself, as has been universally recognised by those competent to form a judgment, is one of the most magnificent, the most perfect and wonderfully sufficient literary instruments developed by the human mind, at once majestic and sweet and flexible, strong and clearly-formed and full and vibrant and subtle, and its quality and character would be of itself a sufficient evidence of the character and quality of the race whose mind it expressed and the culture of which it was the reflecting medium.

¹ Used by Shankara, for instance, in his philosophical writings

QUANTUM AND THE ENORMOUS CHANGE

PART II

(Continued from the issue of May 1993)

The Three Laws of Kepler and the Beginning of the Scientific Method

BEFORE Kepler set off on computations of the Martian orbit, he had from his studies already discarded the idea of uniform motion. Not only that, after having failed to provide an explanation based on circular orbits that would satisfy all existing data, he began to feel strongly that the other sacred axiom of *circular motion* too must follow suit. The task became immensely difficult since he would now have to attack the problem absolutely with no preconceived notions about the orbital shapes. He proceeded with this programme in a systematic manner.

Since earth was the observatory for the study of all astronomical bodies, it was necessary at first to re-examine the motion of the planet earth itself; any misconceptions here would produce distorted data. For this purpose Kepler devised a most original approach. He marked the motion of the earth just as an astronomer seated on Mars would do and carried out the computations accordingly. The result, as anticipated, was that the earth, like all other planets, did not revolve with uniform motion. Moreover, he found that the planet's velocity at the perihelion and aphelion was inversely proportional to the distance from the sun. This delighted Kepler immensely and reassured his faith in the code that Nature is fundamentally simple.

Until this stage Kepler had been developing his ideas methodically and patiently. But then all of a sudden, as if sparked off by this new discovery, he diverted his research to study the interaction of the sun and the planets in depth. As indicated earlier, his planetary system was one predominantly governed by the sun; but here, with great conviction, he affirmed the existence of a *force* in the sun which causes the planets to move. Probing further, he found that these planetary movements depend basically on one factor, their distance from the sun. The power the sun needs to overcome the laziness of a farther planet is less than that needed for a planet closer to it. At last Kepler believed that he had successfully proved the "instinctive conviction" expressed in the *Cosmological Mysteries*, which up till now had only stood as a speculation.

But his calculations befuddled him somewhat. The relation between the planet's distance from the sun and its speed, which he had discovered and by which he was greatly fascinated, was valid only for the two extreme points. It seems that his impatience to get hold of the physical forces in the solar system

had clouded his critical faculties for a moment. As a result, he erroneously extended his findings—valid for aphelion and perihelion—into a general rule for the whole orbit. We shall, however, come to these aspects afterwards.

Up to now Kepler had not yet fulfilled his first objective of determining the motion of the earth itself; all he knew was that the earth did not move with uniform velocity and this was not sufficient for him to predict its position at a given moment.

As he believed that the velocity of the planet depended inversely on its distance from the sun, he thought that the time the planet would take to cover a small fraction of the arc would be proportional to that distance. In figuring out these details mathematically he found that there were several anomalies; however, in the process, he stumbled upon a very significant discovery. He found that the line joining the planet and the sun swept out equal areas of the orbit in equal intervals of time. This law of “amazing simplicity” is Kepler’s immortal **Second Law**, one which he discovered at the “end of a dreadfully confusing labyrinth”. In spite of the faulty distance-velocity relationship, the result obtained by Kepler was not only correct; it also turned out to be an extremely beautiful and elegant Law. Arthur Koestler sums up this incident by saying: “It is perhaps the most amazing sleepwalking performance in the history of science.”

The manner in which Kepler discovered the First Law is equally fascinating; but quite in contrast to his previous discovery, it lacks that element of coincidental luck.

The object of his research was to define with accuracy the Martian orbit and all that he had in his hands at present was a relation between the planet’s velocity and its distance from the sun. By the time he returned to the problem after four years, he had acquired an unparalleled skill in inventing original geometrical methods. With this enhanced technical maturity he gave circular orbits one last and thorough chance; he would write them off only afterwards by saying: “The conclusion is quite simply that the planet’s path is not a circle. It curves inwards on both sides and outward again at opposite ends. Such a curve is called an oval.”

Kepler himself knew very little about such an oval curve; this meant that the start would not only be random but, initially, a true struggle to understand its geometrical nature. His early elaborate attempts on various egg-shaped orbits are not only indicative of these, but clearly suggest that the research was proving to be another journey through another dark labyrinth. Once again, as before, he spent two laborious years on tedious calculations with no apparent result; he tried and abandoned various kinds of elliptical orbits—simply because they failed the acid test, to match his master Tycho Brahe’s supreme observations. Whenever he believed that he had finally pinned down this most elusive of all planets into his equations and tables, he would spot certain discrepancies that

would force him to reject the attempted idea and he would start afresh.

But then, all by chance, he noticed the recurrence of a particular number, 0.00429, indicating a mathematical familiarity underlying the various discrepancies. Intrigued by this phenomenon, he made further investigations into this regularity. There he not only discovered the geometrical cause of this unique number but finally, after almost a long decade of incredible labour, found the secret of the Martian orbit. The radius of the circle that circumscribes the elliptical orbit multiplied by 0.00429 determined the depth of curvature on the two sides of the ellipse. What more did he need? With a simple formula he was now able to specify the manner in which the planet's distance varied from the sun. The goal had been achieved!

No, yet not quite so in the eyes of Kepler! He had no idea whatsoever about the nature of the curve described by the newly discovered equation. And so he set out on a last wild goose chase to construct a geometrical figure that would correspond to his new finding. With trial, error, and retrial, Kepler finally arrived at the **First Law**; this law states that *the shape of an orbit described by the planet is an ellipse where the sun occupies one of the two foci*. Kepler was now successful in achieving the ultimate dream of any astronomer since the days of Plato—determining with precision the motion of Mars. His exhilarating delight can hardly be imagined by us; nevertheless, a taste of this exquisite feeling is perceived in the following comment he made: “The roads that lead to knowledge are as wondrous as that knowledge itself.”

To a scientific mind these two simple and elegant Laws explained with tangible clarity the interaction between the sun and the planet; in addition to that, these worked hand in hand wonderfully: predictions of planetary motions based on these Laws came out true with an incredible accuracy. This epoch-making study, first published in 1609, is analysed by T. Kuhn as follows: “A mathematical technique simpler than any employed since Apollonius and Hipparchus yielded predictions far more accurate than any that had ever been made before.” At long last the problem of the planets hanging on the astronomical charts for more than 1500 years was solved, and solved in a system where two radical departures from all earlier ones were made. The first is that scientific considerations overruled all theological and mythological ones; secondly the researcher's paper-work, his geometrical creations, were not mere computational techniques—as Copernicus had considered them to be—but presented a true picture of the planetary system. It is in bringing about *these* attitudes that the essential contribution Kepler made to the development of scientific thought lies—an enormous change indeed.

But, more importantly, we must emphasise that Kepler made observational data the sole basis for carrying out his mathematical calculations. He discarded orbit after trial orbit when the final result did not match Brahe's data in the minutest manner. This “scrupulous attempt to fit his orbits to objective data is

often cited as an early example of the *scientific method* at its best” (Italics our own). Putting observation as the final arbiter for any theory was the foundation on which he pioneered these changing attitudes; though this new stance of placing “irreducible obstinate facts” at the helm of all research was very much in its germinal stage, it paid rich dividends in the centuries to come.

The merit of this method is further seen in the deduction of the Third Law of Planetary motion made by him. It establishes a very simple relationship between the distance of the planet from the sun and the time it takes to go in its orbit once.

In the light of immediate practical use this Law hardly influenced the astronomy of the age, for it did not help astronomers to compute any special quantity that was previously unknown. But it is a Law which carries two important features. Firstly, from a global perspective, it widens the horizons of our knowledge about the universe by taking in a single sweep all the planets together. Then, from the Keplerian standpoint, its fascination lies in its strong appeal to those sentiments that are precious to neo-Platonists and neo-Pythagoreans.

This Law establishes a relation between planets in different orbits and at the same time reveals a regularity never before perceived in any cosmological model. These two factors put together give to our understanding of the planetary system a sound and near-complete meaning by making it a single functional unit.

From the point of view of Keplerian travail, it should be stated that this work was equally long and tedious. And this laborious study of his is not only a reassurance of his strong belief in simplicity but, more distinctly than the previous research, illustrates his intense faith in the code that it is the task of a scientist to unravel “the mathematical harmonies embedded in nature by Divine Spirit”.

It appears that such soundness of approach is bound to lead to something very revolutionary. A planetary system solely governed by physical forces, laws that describe the planet-sun interaction, and a formula that makes our solar system a single machinery have in it the seeds of the Universal Law of Gravitation. That was discovered by Newton a few decades later. We may pose the question: Why had another genius to arrive on the scene to discover that? But Newton’s discovery may be seen as a kind of natural sequel to something fundamental that had already been found. This fundamental is the beginning of the empirico-rational approach introduced by science in these investigations. In that sense Kepler may be said to be the first pioneer who introduced this new philosophy in the study of science.

Let us recapitulate: Kepler demonstrated a firm attitude in holding on to observation at the helm of research and created a universe solely governed by physical causes. As a result, he pioneered the empirico-rational approach and radically changed the course of astronomy. Very gradually the elite scientists of

the day also began to recognise the value of this new method and give scientific studies a new meaning. But it should not be forgotten that the governing authority was still very orthodox and theological. In its eyes such an outlook of the universe was far from acceptable and it was only a question of time before the minor frictions between engrooved theological thinking and the new scientific method would grow into a historical battle. The stunning new discoveries of a practical-minded Galileo Galilei—a contemporary of the leading mathematician of the day, Johannes Kepler—shook the Christian authorities a little too violently.... The time had come.

Galileo's new discoveries and the Church's reactions are topics of discussions to follow.

(To be continued)

VIKAS DHANDHANIA

A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS

(Continued from the issue of May 1993)

2. OUTDO THE MASTER

AGASTYA was yet to fulfil the mission for which he was sent to the South. He had meticulously chosen his twelve disciples to promulgate the Tamil language. His aim was to teach them the language through his book AGATTIYAM and send them to different parts in the South as language instructors. He was quite confident that with such a band of serious, hard-working, always ready-to-learn and above all very obedient students, he would be able to complete his mission.

As teachers have their own favourites among their students Agastya too had his. He was Thranadhmagṇi, popularly known by his surname Tolkappiyar. A 'Kappiyar' is a physical and spiritual descendant of, or one affiliated to, the family of Bhargavas (a people of the east subdued by Bhīma). 'Tol' means ancient. Hence the Tolkappiyar family was the most ancient of the Kappiyars settled in the Tamil country.

Agastya, who had a lot of faith in Tolkappiyar, one day assigned him the work of escorting his wife Lopamudra, who was away at that time, back to the Podhiyal hills (now in Thirunelvely district) where he planned to have his permanent abode.

As students of yore opened their mouths only when necessity arose, Tolkappiyar nodded his head in approval.

"Do not forget to maintain a respectable distance...of at least four rods away from Lopamudra," said the guru.

Tolkappiyar nodded again.

The journey began. When a woman is nearby, every man thinks-or at least pretends that he is a hero. Keeping his master's words in mind, Tolkappiyar kept his distance, turning his head now and again to know if any wild animal slunk on their track.

Time moved like an avalanche. "We have come," Tolkappiyar cried in joy. "We will be with the master soon after we cross this river Vaigai."

Lopamudra, a princess by birth, was not accustomed to crossing rivers on her own. And the river was in spate. She found it extremely difficult to wade through the river. Fear gripped her. She shouted for help.

Tolkappiyar, for fear that she might be carried away by the powerful stream stretched his hand so that his master's wife might make use of it to reach the shore. But right at that time his master's words began to ring in his head like a warning bell. Reflexively his hand withdrew. He broke a bamboo stick and held it out to the struggling lady.

Lopamudra's eyes twinkled as they thanked him profusely for the timely



help. She reached the river bank

Tolkappiyar moved four rods away and escorted her to the abode of the sage.

Agastya instead of welcoming them looked daggers at them. Tolkappiyar blinked like an innocent child. Lopamudra stood disappointed, unaware of what was going on in her husband's mind. Together they saw the sage's eyes turn red.

"Tolkappiyar! You have not faithfully obeyed my words," roared Agastya. "Lopamudra! You have proved unfaithful to me by raising your eyes towards this fellow."

Tolkappiyar opened his mouth to speak. But the words got stuck in his throat. He was in a stupefied state. Lopamudra looked at her husband with a puzzled face.

"For these unpardonable sins, let not your souls reach Heaven when they leave their physical frames," cursed the angry sage.

Tolkappiyar mustered courage to speak: "Necessity knows no law, my master! Had I not used the bamboo stick, I could not have brought your wife here at all. The river in spate would have washed her away."

"Courtesy demands that one should be grateful when one is helped. Do I deserve such a harsh treatment for doing so?" asked Lopamudra amidst her tears.

Agastya stared at both of them full and round. "Your words of excuse and your tears of excuse will not buy back your lost paradise," he raved. After a pause he added, "My words are final"

Incensed at the injustice done to him and Lopamudra, Tolkappiyar yelled, for the first and the last time, at his guru. "O Sage! You are a father to me since you have taught me. I have treated your wife as my mother. No son would allow his mother to be washed away by the hungry stream, even at the peril of his life. Since I have performed only the duty of a son to a mother, I am not guilty. Since you have cursed me in spite of my being faithful and obedient to you, I in turn curse you. You too shall have no place in Heaven."

Flabbergasted stood Agastya. He saw his one-time favourite disciple stride out of the hermitage forever.

With a vengeance, Tolkappiyar wrote a new book of grammar, and called it TOLKAPPIYAM. He did it purely with the intention of outdoing his master's work.

Agastya strictly warned his other disciples not to read the black sheep's work. But Adangottasan, yet another illustrious disciple of the Sage, read and re-read the book in order to find the defects in it. All his attempts ended in a fiasco. He found TOLKAPPIYAM more scholarly than AGATTIYAM.

Tolkappiyar succeeded in his attempt to outdo his master. And this is how TOLKAPPIYAM (the earliest extant work of Tamil grammar) supplanted AGATTIYAM (from which only a few verses are available today).

3. A FLAW IS A FLAW IS A FLAW

Madurai was the capital of the Pandya kingdom. It was the grand city that contributed to the growth of Tamil literature.

During the reign of King Vankia Chudamani Pandya, the Tamil poets had their heyday. He had in his palace a coterie of poets who gave him cerebral pleasure. The chief among them was Nakkiran, the intrepid poet-critic who had guts enough to criticize the poetry of the gods.

As an ardent devotee of Lord Somasundarar (one among the many names of Lord Siva), the king worshipped Him thrice a day—dawn, noon and dusk—in His temple. Therefore he ordered all the available trees and plants that bore sweet-smelling flowers to be planted in his royal garden, so that he would not run short of flowers at any time. Since he had a special liking for *Shanbagam* (champak) and offered garlands strung of that flower to the Lord, he came to be known as Shanbagamaran.

On one pleasant evening in Summer as the king relaxed in his garden, the trees and plants fanned him. The breeze laden with the sweet scent of flowers hugged him. It was a feast indeed to his senses. And the breeze, soft and cool, lulled him and he fell into a trance.

He woke up with a start as his delicate olfactory nerves experienced an overpoweringly sweet fragrance. He sniffed, and looked around. He saw his queen coming towards him. He thought that it evidently proceeded from the queen's tresses. But at close quarters he found to his dismay that no flower adorned her cascade of unbraided hair.

He grew inquisitive. Was the smell that emanated from his queen's long flowing hair natural or artificial?

He spent a sleepless night discussing with himself for and against the problem and finally found an answer. Yet he wanted to refer the matter to the scholars of his land.

On the morning of the next day the town-crier beat his tom-tom and made it known to the public his majesty's doubt. He then added: "Whoever succeeds in composing a poem clearing the doubt of the king will be rewarded with a thousand pieces of gold."

Anxious to win the prize, many a poet flocked to the court, day after day. But no one was able to spot what the king had in his mind. Since none of their poems satisfactorily solved the royal doubt, the poets went away disappointed.

A poor brahmin lad named Dharumi, who had remained a bachelor for want of financial assistance, walked straight into the temple and appealed to the Lord with all sincerity to help him: "No one has the right to call himself a complete man till he gets married. If only you compose a poem clearing the doubt of the king and give it to me, O Lord, I'll become very rich. Please be kind to this orphan and allow him to be called a complete man."

Moved by Dharumi's unflinching devotion and steadfast love, the Lord appeared before him and dictated a poem. Dharumi took it down on a palm-leaf and carried it to the king.

He read the poem

Tell me, O bee!
feeding on the nectar of flowers
Is there a blossom on earth
emanating a sweeter scent
than the long flowing hair
of my even-toothed lady-love
whose gait would put
the peacock to shame.

The king beamed with joy, for the poem seconded his own thought. Fed up so far with the nonsensical poems of the preceding competitors, the king immediately announced the reward to Dharumi

"Take it. It's all yours," said the king to Dharumi as he stretched out a plate on which sat majestically a bag of gold.

His eyebrows raised, Dharumi moved towards the king with all humility. He reached for the bag.

"Don't," came a voice. It was Nakkiran's. "Your poem doesn't deserve any reward. It is flawed."

Dharumi lowered his face in shame. The next minute he took to his heels. He barged into the temple all the time howling: "I deserve it... I deserve it... Too many a slip between the cup and the lip."

The Lord appeared again. Dharumi rehearsed to him the happenings in the court of the king. After a pause he added: "I am after all a poor brahmin accustomed to stomach such insults. But unbearable is the pain when a mortal calls your composition a flawed one."

Assuming the guise of a poet, the Lord entered the court and asked in an arrogant tone: "Who the deuce is he that called my composition a flawed piece?"

"It's me," came the bold reply from Nakkiran.

The Lord stared him in the face full and round

"Point out the flaw "

"It is not in the form but in its content "

"Go ahead."

"There could be no inherent natural fragrance in the tresses of women. And your poem is opposed to truth "

"Does your objection stand even against the locks of divine damsels?"

"Yes. It holds good for all women."

"Well then! What about the consort of Lord Siva whom you worship every day?"

“Parvati may be the wife of Lord Siva, but she is also a woman.”

Infuriated by such a curt reply the Lord slightly opened His third eye to indicate to him with whom he was arguing.

Nakkiran was no mean creature to shiver at the sight of the Lord’s third eye. He raised his voice and said: “A flaw is a flaw is a flaw, even if you open your third eye ”

The Lord in an outburst of anger opened fully His fiery third eye on Nakkiran, with all the intention of teaching him the great lesson—Humility.

Engulfed in flames, Nakkiran ran for his life and jumped into the nearby lotus pond.

Unable to bear the pain caused by burns, Nakkiran preferred to stay under water, emerging to the surface now and again for a whiff of air.

The poets in the court felt like children in the absence of their mother. They joined hands and made a mass appeal to Lord Siva to cure Nakkiran of the burns He had inflicted on him.

Lord Siva turned a deaf ear to them. But when eminent poets like Kapilar and Paranar petitioned Him, he cooled down and considered their request favourably.

(More legends on the way)

P. RAJA

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Twenty-ninth Annual Conference

16 August 1992

SRI AUROBINDO AND WORLD-UNITY

Speech by Arindam Das

TODAY, as rapid changes are gripping the world and a new world-order is emerging, there is felt an urgent need of some kind of a lasting world-unity that will necessarily bring a qualitative change in the life of humanity. Indeed, the extremely rapid technological advancement in recent years has transformed the whole earth into a global village, where interdependence among the various nations has reached an unprecedented scale. But, sadly enough, this enormous amount of interdependence has not translated itself into a solid world-unity. And, therefore, one still finds conflicts galore—political, economic, religious, cultural and ideological—that are threatening to retard man's endeavour to build a secure and harmonious world-order

Needless to say that faced with this situation several thinkers and statesmen of different nations have proposed various solutions and some have even tried in their own way to bring peace and harmony in the world. But, as is evident, the means by which they have sought to realise this are of a superficial nature, largely based on limited mental conceptions and material conveniences that are incapable of delivering a true unity. True unity is primarily a psychological phenomenon and it needs an altogether different approach in order to be realised.

Sri Aurobindo, in his book *The Ideal of Human Unity*, tackles the problem of bringing a true unity in the world in all its aspects, and therefore it is fitting that we grasp the essential features of his view, considering that he had a profound spiritual vision and an extraordinary intuitive intellect that cannot but reveal the truth in all its dimensions.

Sri Aurobindo, being a mystic, always explains the outer expressions of life in terms of inner or psychological realities of consciousness that are normally unknown to the ordinary man. It is natural therefore that he proceeds to explain the trend of world-unity in the light of evolutionary Nature's continuous drive towards higher and higher levels of consciousness forming larger and larger group-units. In the evolutionary process of the society, there was first the family, then came the commune, then the clan or tribe, the small city-state and finally

the nation. It follows therefore that the next step in the evolutionary process lies in the union of all the existing nations into a single world-community. Of course there was the empire too as an intermediary step in this evolution, but both ancient and modern empires have dissolved, because they could not bring about a real psychological unity. On the other hand, the nation still enjoys an enduring unity. Therefore evolutionary Nature's further step would be to retain the nation-unit but englobe it in the larger world-unity embracing all the present nations of the world.

According to the general conception among social and political thinkers, the important factors that are required to bring about this unity are geographical convenience, common race, religion, language, culture and historical traditions. But to Sri Aurobindo these are of secondary importance since they are external factors. As already stated, in order to bring about a real and lasting unity, a sense of psychological oneness is indispensable. It is very necessary to stress the essential importance of this psychological unity today, because many modern social and political thinkers lay greater emphasis on social, administrative and political unity, which though necessary needs the support of the inner psychological unity. Social, administrative and political unity brought by military means or economic conveniences will result in a world-state which might bring about some kind of mechanical unity quickly and effectively, offering in the process temporary advantages, namely, strict organisation, efficiency, security, order and material well-being. But along with these advantages there will also be a serious disadvantage. A world-state of this type will inevitably make life mechanical, devoid of colour, richness, variety and creative dynamism since the individual will be left with little freedom in life. Everything would be made standardised and uniform, thereby reducing the individual to a mere puppet in the hands of the state. This state-idea owes its origin to the socialist ideal of equality which holds the society to be supreme, and the individual to be merely its tool whose sole duty is to contribute to the general welfare of the society. Naturally, therefore, this cannot be the true form of unity which is demanded, as the individuals, who form the basic units of the society, will be undermined.

In Sri Aurobindo's view, if a lasting unity has to be brought about, the strife between the individual claiming liberty and the collectivity insisting on unity has to be reconciled. Till now, mankind has tried to realise the ideals of liberty, equality and unity separately instead of arriving at their reconciliation. Surely, therefore, they have failed, since freedom without unity creates a competitive system of society leading to exploitation and injustice, and unity without freedom creates uniformity. A true harmony between the individual and the group can be brought about only by the principle of unity in diversity which will reconcile individual freedom with order and discipline. This principle, employed in the formation of the nation and the world-community, will bring about real unity that will lead to progress and perfection of both the individual and the group.

The principle of diversity in oneness can only be achieved when there exists a real sense of brotherhood among the individuals of the group. And this will arrive when mankind follows a spiritual religion of humanity that recognises a fundamental equality in human beings derived from a living sense of a single soul in humanity of which each man is an incarnation and soul-form. This concept is also reflected in the spiritual principle of fraternity which, unlike the principles of liberty and equality, has been largely neglected by humanity.

Sri Aurobindo maintains that the three ideals, liberty, equality and fraternity are the "three godheads of the soul" that are really the essential ideals needed for an enduring world-unity. However, it must always be cautioned that these ideals have to co-exist, and this is possible only when the ideals of liberty and equality are united in the ideal of fraternity or brotherhood. The principle of brotherhood is the inherent quality of the soul which synthesises the two seemingly contradictory principles of liberty and equality. As Sri Aurobindo says, "Yet is brotherhood the real key to the triple gospel of the idea of humanity. The union of liberty and equality can only be achieved by the power of brotherhood and it cannot be founded on anything else. But brotherhood exists only in the soul and by the soul; it can exist by nothing else. For this brotherhood is not a matter either of physical kinship or of vital association or of intellectual agreement. When the soul claims freedom, it is the freedom of its self-development, the self-development of the divine in man in all his being. When it claims equality, what it is claiming is that freedom equally for all and the recognition of the same soul, the same godhead in all human beings. When it strives for brotherhood, it is founding that equal freedom of self-development on a common aim, a common life, a unity of mind and feeling founded upon the recognition of this inner spiritual unity. These three things are in fact the nature of the soul; for freedom, equality, unity are the eternal attributes of the Spirit."¹

Thus in man's endeavour to bring a real unity in the world, the principles of liberty and equality, securely based on the spiritual principle of fraternity, must be the guides for a sure success. For this the primary goal of man must be to discover the soul in him and try to live from his soul and not from his ego. This is the true meaning of the spiritual religion of humanity that will lead mankind to a better future.

¹ *The Ideal of Human Unity* (Cent Ed , Vol 15), pp 546-47