

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

MARCH 1996

PRICE: Rs. 10.00

Revised Subscriptions

from January 1996, owing to considerable rise in costs, especially of paper.

INLAND

Annual. Rs 100 00

Life Membership: Rs. 1400.00

Price per Single Copy: Rs. 10.00

OVERSEAS

Sea Mail

Annual. \$18 00 or £12 00

Life Membership \$252 00 or £168.00

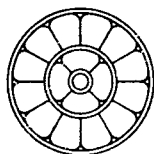
Air Mail

Annual \$36 00 for American & Pacific countries

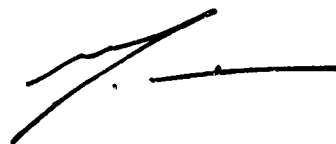
\$26 00 for all other countries

Life Membership \$504.00 for American & Pacific countries

\$364.00 for all other countries



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.



All Rights Reserved No matter appearing in this journal or part thereof may be reproduced or translated without written permission from the publishers except for short extracts as quotations
All correspondence to be addressed to
MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002, India
Editor's Phone 34782
Publishers Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Editor K D SETHNA
Published by HARIKANT C PATEL
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST
PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT, PONDICHERRY 605 002
Printed by AMIYO RANJAN GANGULY
at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry 605 002
PRINTED IN INDIA
Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No R N 8667/63

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLIX

No. 3

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

<i>The Mother</i>	
TWO UNPUBLISHED LETTERS	... 169
THE DISCOVERY OF THE PSYCHIC	. 170
<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	
MIND, VITAL AND PSYCHIC	. 172
<i>Amal Kiran (K D. Sethna)</i>	
LIFE — POETRY — YOGA	
SOME PERSONAL LETTERS	174
<i>Ravindra Khanna</i>	
REVIEW ARTICLE	. 181
<i>Gopi (R. Murugavel)</i>	
KARTHIKA LAMPS (Poem)	... 185
<i>Nilima Das</i>	
SRI AUROBINDO — THE SOUL OF INDIA	... 186
<i>Shyam Kumari</i>	
MUSINGS ON <i>PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS</i>	190
THE EXPLOITATION OF THE WIFE AND THE MOTHER	191
<i>Uli</i>	
TWO POEMS	
THE PLAY OF NATURE	
THE TROGLODYTES	197
<i>Prabhakar (Batti)</i>	
AMONG THE NOT SO GREAT	. 198
<i>Jagat Kapadia</i>	
APPROACHES AND ACCESS POINTS	... 202
<i>S M</i>	
BROKEN WINGS (Poem)	.. 205
<i>Abani Sinha</i>	
A PLUNGE INTO THE UNKNOWN	... 206

<i>Monamie Ghatak</i>		
THE QUEST (POEM)	...	213
<i>Kailas Jhaveri</i>		
SRI AUROBINDO: A TALK	..	214
<i>Georgette Coty</i>		
CHRISTALIS: A STORY		226
<i>Ramraj</i>		
IS WORLD UNITY EVER GOING TO BE A REALITY?	..	234
<i>P. Raja</i>		
A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS	...	236
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE		
<i>P. Ramasamy</i>		
<i>Review of</i> THE SCORIA' A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FOR THE CONNOISSEUR	...	240
<i>N. Jayashanmukham</i>		
THE TWO TEXTS OF THE GITA ORIGINAL AND EDITED	..	243

STUDENTS' SECTION

<i>Speech by Arvind Akki</i>		
THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION		
THIRTY-SECOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 13 AUGUST 1995		
"MANTRA AND JAPA IN SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA"	...	249

TWO UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF THE MOTHER

1

I HAVE given no right, no responsibility, no authority to any ashramite, to any sadhak, to interfere to change or to try to rectify whatever goes on here, around him, or protest against whatever might seem to him wrong or out of place, or however he might be affected by it. The only responsibility that one has is to change one's own nature, the sole duty one has been entrusted with is to see to one's own progress, and nothing else is any of one's concern.

This is the first and most important condition that one has to remember constantly if one wants to do one's Sadhana here, in Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

2

Being a part of Sri Aurobindo's Truth and manifested by me, there is no power on the earth or anywhere else in space and time that can destroy or dissolve the Ashram of the Lord, SRI AUROBINDO.

Such vain posturings by small minds are merely amusing.

Love and Blessings.

THE MOTHER ON THE DISCOVERY OF THE PSYCHIC

THERE are some solitary travellers [to discover the psychic] and for them a few general indications may be useful.

The starting-point is to seek in yourself that which is independent of the body and the circumstances of life, which is not born of the mental formation that you have been given, the language you speak, the habits and customs of the environment in which you live, the country where you are born or the age to which you belong. You must find, in the depths of your being, that which carries in it a sense of universality, limitless expansion, unbroken continuity. Then you decentralize, extend and widen yourself; you begin to live in all things and in all beings; the barriers separating individuals from each other break down. You think in their thoughts, vibrate in their sensations, feel in their feelings, live in the life of all. What seemed inert suddenly becomes full of life, stones quicken, plants feel and will and suffer, animals speak in a language more or less inarticulate, but clear and expressive; everything is animated by a marvellous consciousness without time or limit. And this is only one aspect of the psychic realisation; there are others, many others. All help you to go beyond the barriers of your egoism, the walls of your external personality, the impotence of your reactions and the incapacity of your will.

But, as I have already said, the path to the realisation is long and difficult, strewn with snares and problems to be solved, which demand an unflinching determination. It is like the explorer's trek through virgin forest in quest of an unknown land, of some great discovery. The psychic being is also a great discovery which requires at least as much fortitude and endurance as the discovery of new continents. A few simple words of advice may be useful to one who has resolved to undertake it.

The first and perhaps the most important point is that the mind is incapable of judging spiritual things. All those who have written on this subject have said so; but very few are those who have put it into practice. And yet, in order to proceed on the path, it is absolutely indispensable to abstain from all mental opinion and reaction.

Give up all personal seeking for comfort, satisfaction, enjoyment or happiness. Be only a burning fire for progress, take whatever comes to you as an aid to your progress and immediately make whatever progress is required.

Try to take pleasure in whatever you do, but never do anything for the sake of pleasure.

Never get excited, nervous or agitated. Remain perfectly calm in the face of all circumstances. And yet be always alert to discover what progress you still have to make and lose no time in making it.

Never take physical happenings at their face value. They are always a clumsy attempt to express something else, the true thing which escapes our

superficial understanding.

Never complain of the behaviour of anyone, unless you have the power to change in his nature what makes him act in this way; and if you have the power, change him instead of complaining.

Whatever you do never forget the goal which you have set before you. There is nothing great or small once you have set out on this great discovery; all things are equally important and can either hasten or delay its success. Thus before you eat concentrate a few seconds in the aspiration that the food you are about to eat may bring your body the substance it needs to serve as a solid base for your efforts towards the great discovery and give it the energy for persistence and perseverance in the effort.

Before you go to sleep, concentrate a few seconds in the aspiration that the sleep may restore your fatigued nerves, bring calm and quietness to your brain so that on waking you may, with renewed vigour, begin again your journey on the path of the great discovery.

Before you act, concentrate in the will that your action may help or at least in no way hinder your march forward towards the great discovery.

When you speak, before the words come out of your mouth, concentrate just long enough to check your words and allow only those that are absolutely necessary to pass, only those that are not in any way harmful to your progress on the path of the great discovery.

To sum up, never forget the purpose and goal of your life. The will for the great discovery should be always there above you, above what you do and what you are, like a huge bird of light dominating all the movements of your being.

Before the untiring persistence of your effort, an inner door will suddenly open and you will emerge into a dazzling splendour that will bring you the certitude of immortality, the concrete experience that you have always lived and always shall live, that external forms alone perish and that these forms are, in relation to what you are in reality, like clothes that are thrown away when worn out. Then you will stand erect, freed from all chains, and instead of advancing laboriously under the weight of circumstances imposed upon you by Nature, which you had to endure and bear if you did not want to be crushed by them, you will be able to walk on, straight and firm, conscious of your destiny, master of your life.

(Collected Works of the Mother, Centenary Edition, Vol. 12, pp. 33-35)

SRI AUROBINDO

MIND, VITAL AND PSYCHIC

THE point about the emotional and the higher vital is a rather difficult one. In the classification in which the mind is taken as something more than the thinking, perceiving and willing intelligence, the emotional can be reckoned as part of the mind, the vital in the mental. In another classification it is rather the most mentalised part of the vital nature. In the first case, the term 'higher vital' is confined to that larger movement of the conscious life-force which is concerned with creation, with power and force and conquest, with giving and self-giving and gathering from the world for further action and expenditure of power, throwing itself out in the wider movements of life, responsive to the greater objects of Nature. In the second arrangement, the emotional being stands at the top of the vital nature and the two together make the higher vital. As against them stands the lower vital which is concerned with the pettier movements of action and desire and stretches down into the vital physical where it supports the life of the more external activities and all physical sensations, hungers, cravings, satisfactions. The term 'lower' must not be considered in a pejorative sense; it refers only to the position in the hierarchy of the planes. For although this part of the nature in earthly beings tends to be very obscure and is full of perversions,—lust, greed of all kinds, vanity, small ambitions, petty anger, envy, jealousy are its ordinary guests,—still there is another side to it which makes it an indispensable mediator between the inner being and the outer life.

It is not a fact that every psychic experience embodies itself in a purified and rightly directed vital current; it does that when it has to externalise itself in action. Psychic experience is in itself a quite independent thing and has its own characteristic forms. The psychic being stands behind all the others; its force is the true soul-power. But if it comes to the front, it can suffuse all the rest; mind, vital, the physical consciousness can take its stamp and be transformed by its influence. When the nature is properly developed, there is a psychic in the mental, a psychic in the vital, a psychic in the physical. It is when that is there and strong, that we can say of someone that he evidently has a soul. But there are some in whom this element is so lacking that we have to use faith in order to believe that they have a soul at all. The centre of the psychic being is behind the centre of the emotional being; it is the emotional that is nearest dynamically to the psychic and in most men it is through the emotional centre that the psychic can be most easily reached and through the psychicised emotion that it can be most easily expressed. Many therefore mistake the one for the other; but there is a world of difference between the two. The emotions normally are vital in their character and not part of the psychic nature.

It must be remembered that while this classification is indispensable for

psychological self-knowledge and discipline and practice, it can be used best when it is not made too rigid and cutting a formula. For things run very much into each other and a synthetical sense of these powers is as necessary as the analysis. Mind, for instance, is everywhere. The physical mind is technically placed below the vital and yet it is a prolongation of the mind proper and one that can act in its own sphere by direct touch with the higher mental intelligence. And there is too an obscure mind of the body, of the very cells, molecules, corpuscles. Haeckel, the German materialist, spoke somewhere of the will in the atom, and recent science, dealing with the incalculable individual variation in the activity of the electrons, comes near to perceiving that this is not a figure but the shadow thrown by a secret reality. This body-mind is a very tangible truth; owing to its obscurity and mechanical clinging to past movements and facile oblivion and rejection of the new, we find in it one of the chief obstacles to permeation by the supermind Force and the transformation of the functioning of the body. On the other hand, once effectively converted, it will be one of the most precious instruments for the stabilisation of the supramental Light and Force in material Nature.

(Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 22, pp. 338-40)

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

You want me to summarise what the Mother wishes us to keep in mind about the Divine Grace. Here is my report.

The Divine Grace is there everywhere, illumining all, transforming all, as quickly as it is divinely possible—leading the world to light.

Yes, that's a very good reason never to worry. Never to have anxiety about *anything*, because despite our incomplete (that is to say, nearly non-existent) understanding of the Grace and its infinite Working She is there.

And if one could remember this always, all pains, all ignorant, struggling, apparent deaths of our being would become, each and every one, blessings. For indeed they must be blessings in the Divine Vision; but our limited viewpoint admits only the surface “reality”, the appearance of things.

How to remember always the Grace? That is a question worth asking! And the solution itself will be our yoga. To turn our faces to the Light, with greater and greater trust, a growing joy in the certitude that She is “preparing all”, thus we must “hope for and endure all”. To be true to the Mother in our daily lives would seem to consist in this: a constant remembrance, a constant offering—and an infinite gratitude to the Love which leans over us, children of Time, from Eternity.

Oh Lord, teach us to remember Thee,

That we may be exalted!

That we may accept Thy gifts with the humility and joy of true men!

That we may grow towards brighter and brighter revelations of Thy marvellous vistas, Thy infinite possibilities, Thy glorious truth!

Let me conclude with a direct quotation from the Mother:

“It is only in the calm that one can know and do. All that is done in agitation and violence is an aberration and a folly.

“The first sign of the Divine Presence in the being is peace.” (22.5 1974)

*

I have decided that all that was written for you must go with you. Some day you will look at it again with the very eyes, deep and tender, that called it forth, and then you will remember its true beauty and you will fall at that beauty's feet and beg its forgiveness.

Forgiveness, because its being—sun-souled and rainbow-bodied, an image of your own real self—you tried to pass through the rigours of a mental judgment, a mental conception of right and wrong, youth and age, spirituality and physicality, a mental criterion which was absolutely extrinsic and foreign to

the poetry of our friendship and saw in that poetry nothing but a colourful prison closing upon you with profaning hands, and failed to understand the Mother's definition of poetry: "sensuousness of the spirit."

There is a golden child waiting to be born in you, a future of warm spontaneous spirituality. But there is also another force that has its eye on you and would like to make you its instrument. This force I can only characterise as a holy hag who has merely an abstract idea of holiness, and attempts to fit truth and beauty into its lifeless pattern. Not that truth and beauty disappear—they somehow are still there, but how tortured, how twisted their once-wonderful limbs become! I appeal to you. "Let not that falsified form grip your being. Keep yourself open always to the birth of the golden child. It may not be easy, you may wander here and there, you may need guidance at times, but you will come home as you are meant to do, with a fluent flame—instead of hurrying to an earlier destination which is stiff and stern, a house of living death rather than of immortal life." (1.11.1974)

*

Your letter moved me very much by its note of sincere urgency. The inner and higher call has certainly come to you with its full golden ring. All I can suggest to you is to come here where there is a concentration of spiritual presence and power made by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The Samadhi is the centre from which spirituality literally radiates. I feel sure that it will bring you not only peace but also progress. You say that you have read some of Sri Aurobindo's books, but I wonder why when Sri Aurobindo was there in the body you never came to Pondicherry to get in living touch with the immense embodied reality of the spirit that he represented. More than any written instruction is the Guru's atmosphere. The ability to go inward and to meditate and receive the Light can be imparted by a look and a touch from the Guru. That is essentially how all Indian Yoga has proceeded. Although Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have left their bodies they have so arranged that at the place where their bodies have been interred their luminous consciousness should remain active, a constant fountain of Grace to all who come with a true seeking in their hearts. At present you seem to be in the condition the French poet Mallarmé has summed up in the line:

The flesh is sad, alas! And I've read all books...

Reading by itself can no longer help you. Books will be of use to you only after you have made a pilgrimage to a Guru's feet or to what may represent them. This is the truest advice I can give you. And, of course, it will be a great pleasure for me to meet you personally.

I'm interested to see from your letter that on the one hand you have gone in

for spiritual information and on the other for scientific knowledge. Einstein, Planck, Heisenberg, Schroedinger, Born and Philippe Franck have been magnets to me also. A few years back I had the joy of having a personal discussion with one of the best scientific minds today: Weizsacker, who came from Germany on a visit to the Ashram. I, myself, have written a whole book (one among my still unpublished twenty-three books) on the structure of scientific thought in physics and biology (8 5 1975)

*

You have done an amazingly efficient job as editor. I can't imagine a more argu-eyed reader with a memory that holds together forms of words occurring anywhere in nearly 500 pages. You have also shown an admirable mastery of the meaning of my various discussions. I like your questions and challenges. Here and there the request to rephrase or clarify has made me realize how necessary it is to have a highly intelligent outsider's viewpoint on one's writing. I cannot thank you enough for the work you have done and seem to have enjoyed doing. *The Spirituality of the Future* is a better script thanks to your "meddling".

Only in three matters I feel a little uncomfortable, though I have done my best to please you. The uncompromising rejection of "which", constituting almost a kind of "witch"-hunting, is rather a surprise to me. At times the close recurrence of "that" makes a clatter hardly agreeable to a ear alert to the rhythmic of style. But I suppose an American academic ear will take delight even in a sentence such as "K.D.S. says that that 'that' that that 'that'-loving Susan wants is superfluous." In addition to the insistence on this relative pronoun again and again in preference to its possible substitute, there is the demand for its presence at all times instead of its omission for the sake of variety as in "The house Jack built." Furthermore, why is it always indispensable as a conjunction? Can't one have a verbal turn like "He says our world is worth living in"? It is a part of good style to avoid stereotyped modes of expression. I should think the groves of academe admit more than one kind of tree to adorn its paths.

I have mentioned two of my little grouses. The third is in regard to what you call the editorial "we" or "us" or "our". Argumentative literature in particular is full of this trio and even another sort—narrative or descriptive literature—employs it freely. Why should one be bound hand and foot to "one" or have to turn an active phrase into a passive merely to avoid "we" or "us" like the plague?

Suppleness, liveliness, diversity, individual flavour are sacrificed by over-much attention to grammar-class correctness. English, unlike French, is not a fixed language with strict rules and planned *tournures*. It is a very flexible medium and even invites alarming liberties in the cause of expressive vitality. To press old Wordsworth from a different context to my purpose:

We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake.

And I doubt whether the greatest American writers invariably adhere to the advices of *A Manual of Style*.

However, I have conformed almost everywhere to your expectations. On the whole the literary problems arising in my particular context do not have a very serious bearing. Besides, I have the impression that you are not just being pedantic and that, knowing the special readership to which my book is addressed, you are guiding me for my own good. In any case, nothing can really diminish my deep appreciation of the thoughtful and sympathetic work you have done. From the standpoint of lucidity, connectivity and consistency every chapter reads better because of your critical help.

I know I have slept over the Questionnaire too long. As soon as this letter, together with the manuscript, has been despatched to you, I'll buckle down to the job and finish it soon. In connection with the biodata, I don't want my picture to appear. Not that I am particularly unpresentable, but I should like each reader to form his own idea of me from my writing. For the same reason I don't wish my date of birth to be published. Let me hurry to tell you that I am a man and my reluctance is not due to any such reason as prompts the chivalrous rule that when one asks (if at all) a woman's age on her birthday one must always couch one's inquiry thus. "What anniversary of your twenty-fifth year are you celebrating?" Let me whisper in your ear that I was born on 25 November 1904. I am also prepared to send you a picture of myself provided you keep it hidden in your hand-bag and exclaim only in private: "My word! he doesn't look his age."

(22 7.1977)

*

I have received your letter about the line from *Savitri* (Ed. 1970, p. 162, line 27, Book II, Canto V):

Ananke's engines organising Chance...

I shall come to its significance in its own context after giving you whatever general information I can about Ananke (pronounced in three syllables). The name is also written "Anangke".

Webster's *New International Dictionary of the English Language* (2nd Ed., 1956), p. 95, col. 2, says:

"Ananke (ánǎng'kê), n. [Gr. anankê] *Gr. Relig.* A personification of compelling necessity, or ultimate fate, to which even the Gods must yield."

The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (Growell Collier & Macmillan, Inc., 1967), pp. 359-360, has this:

“Moirā (Fate) / Tyche (Chance) / Ananke (Necessity)

... *Ananke* (Necessity), like *moira*, is inescapable in its operations but originally controlled only specific events and not the whole range of necessitated occurrences. Plato (*Timaeus*, 47 E. ff.) opposes Necessity to Reason; necessity as ‘errant cause’ is the irrational element in the universe—it can be rationalized by persuasion, but not wholly eliminated. In itself it is a blind and aimless force, and for both Plato and Aristotle it is akin to *tyche*.”

The Encyclopaedia Britannica (1960), Vol. I, p. 869, reads:

“Ananke (Anangkē) in Greek literature, necessity or fate personified. In Homer the personification has not yet been achieved, although even the Gods admit that they are limited in their freedom of action. She is fairly prominent in post-Homeric literature and theological speculation, particularly Orphic, but is definitely known to emerge into cult only at Corinth, where she was worshipped with *Bia* (Might, force). There are one or two faint and dubious traces of her cult elsewhere, but because of her unalterable nature it was pointless to render her offering or sacrifice—‘Nothing is stronger than dread Necessity’ was a Greek byword. In literature she is associated with *Adrasteia*, the *Moirai* (or Fates, to whom she was the Mother, according to Plato in the *Republic*) and similar deities. In Italy she does not appear to have been worshipped at all; the famous description of *Necessitas* (*Ananke*) in Horace’s *Carmina*, which makes her attendant on *Tyche*, is purely literary.”

Now to Sri Aurobindo. He is referring to the way the vital mind is used by the forces of the Life Plane. Behind them is an unknown World-Will, a hidden determining Destiny, a power of That Which Must Be, a supreme Necessity beyond all calculable possibilities. It is this that Sri Aurobindo names *Ananke* after the original Greek concept or intuition. The instruments of it are termed by him “engines”: they are themselves ignorant of the purpose driving them and they even distort its action and the purpose is somehow worked out through a kind of controlled chaos. Sheer Chance seems at play, but its apparent caprices and incoherences are secretly organised in a subtle scheme to reach a certain end. There are three levels, as it were. At the back of all there is *Ananke*: the middle level is that of the life-forces unconsciously moving to *Ananke*’s intent: then we have our own selves whose vital mind is a marionette in the hands of these forces. It seems that, in Sri Aurobindo’s vision, *Ananke* is specifically the World-Will expressing its ultimate design on the Life Plane. Here he makes a departure from the Greek intuition, which strikes us as covering the whole cosmic phenomenon on all the planes. But perhaps the Greek pantheon was very much coloured by the Life-sense and there was not the pure mental outlook which we imagine to be present. The very characters of the Greek Gods impress us as those of mentalised vital beings raised to an ultra-mental pitch. Perhaps the finest figuration of them is in Sri Aurobindo’s *Ilion*, particularly in *The Book of the Gods*. There *Ananke* too acquires the highest aspect possible within the finest understanding of the Greek pantheon. *Ananke* comes in again and again

in the *Book* concerned Let me quote to you a few passages from the 1957 edition.

Here is Zeus speaking:

Always then shall desire and passion strive with Ananke?...
Open the eye of the soul, admit the voice of the Silence.(p. 110)

Now Zeus alludes to Ananke or seems to do so:

All things are by Time and the Will eternal that moves us. (*Ibid*)

Hephaestus thus to Zeus, perhaps making the same allusion.

Yes, I obey thee, my Father, and That which than thou is more mighty...
(p. 120)

Zeus to Artemis:

Shrink from no act that Necessity asks from your luminous natures. (p 122)

Again, Zeus to Dis:

Thou and I, O Dis, remain and our sister Ananke.
That which the joyous hearts of our children, radiant heaven-moths
Flitting mid flowers of sense for the honey of thought, have not captured,
That which Poseidon forgets mid the pomp and the roar of his waters,
We three keep in our hearts. By the Light that I watch for unsleeping,
By thy tremendous consent to the silence and darkness, O Hades,
By her delight renounced and the prayers and worship of mortals
Making herself as an engine of God without bowels or vision,—
Yet in that engine are only heart-beats, yet is her riddle
Only Love that is veiled and pity that suffers and slaughters,
We three are free from ourselves, O Dis, and free from each other.
Do then, O King of the Night, observe then with Time for thy servant
Not my behest, but What she and thou and I are for ever. (p. 123)

In this passage one is not quite certain whether Ananke is the inscrutable Ultimate. There is talk of "God" beyond her as well as beyond Zeus and Dis. We are also told of "What" she and Dis and Zeus are in their everlasting essence.

Ananke again figures in the lines:

So in his arrogance dire the vast invincible Death-god
Triumphing passed out of heaven with Themis and dire Ananke.
Zeus alone in the spheres of his bliss, in his kingdom of brilliance
Sat divine and alarmed; for even the gods in their heavens
Scarce shall live who have gazed on the unveiled face of Ananke,
Heard the accents dire of the Darkness that waits for the ages. (p. 124)

A final mention comes when the dreadful three pass through Troya and the Gods of that city fly away:

Filled was the air with their troops and the sound of a vast lamentation.
Wailing they went, lamenting mortality's ages of greatness,
Ruthless Ananke's deeds and the mortal conquests of Hades. (p 125)

What one gathers from all these passages is that Ananke, the Goddess Necessity, is a compelling power above even Zeus, not to speak of the lesser deities of Olympus, but that even she is after all a Goddess and is an emanation or representative of something still beyond, a nameless and formless Eternal. On a par with her we have two other divine powers:

Ancient Themis remained and awful Dis and Ananke.

Then mid these last of the gods who shall stand when all others have
perished... (p. 123)

From the nature of these three we may guess something of the nature of the supreme and everlasting Mystery. One hint is given by Dis:

I, I am Night and her reign and that of which Night is a symbol. (p 123)

But Dis also adds:

And behind Night is light and not in the sun and his splendours. (*Ibid.*)

A glint of this "light" is afforded us in some lines that echo an Upanishadic vision. Sri Aurobindo tells of "Mind's more subtle fields" to which the gods are called when Zeus sends out his summons—

Mind that pure from this density, throned in her splendours immortal
Looks up at Light and suffers bliss from ineffable kingdoms
Where beyond Mind and its rays is the gleam of a glory supernal:
There our sun cannot shine and our moon has no place for her lustres,
There our lightnings flash not, nor fire of these spaces is suffered. (p. 108)

This is all that I have to say at the moment apropos of your query. I hope I have not disappointed you too much. (14 1 1975)

AMAL KIRAN
(K D SETHNA)

REVIEW

Demeter and Persephone: A Mystery Play by Thémis: Published by Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, Price Rs. 90.

A MYSTERY play is in a class by itself. In the words of Goethe it seeks

To know what forces there must be
That hold the world in unity.

How are a myth and a mystery related? Writes Elizabeth Drew, “Myth (the etymological root is the same as that of mystery) leads us back to ultimate mysteries... to the mystery of life itself.”

Sri Aurobindo has used the myth of Savitri to give significant form to his world-view. His play *Perseus the Deliverer* falls in the same category. In his introductory note Sri Aurobindo wrote, “In a romantic work of imagination of this type these outrages on history do not matter. Time there is more than Einsteinian in its relativity, the creative imagination is its sole disposer and arranger; fantasy reigns sovereign; the names of ancient countries and peoples are brought in only as fringes of a decorative background; anachronisms romp in wherever they can get an easy admittance, ideas and associations from all climes and epochs mingle; myth, romance and realism make up a single whole. For here the stage is the human mind of all times: the subject is an incident in its passage from a semi-primitive temperament surviving in a fairly advanced outward civilisation to a brighter intellectualism and humanism—never quite safe against the resurgence of the dark or violent life-forces which are always there subdued or subordinated or somnolent in the make-up of civilised man—and the first promptings of the deeper and higher psychic and spiritual being which it is his ultimate destiny to become.”

What was just shadowed forth viz., “the first promptings of the deeper and higher psychic and spiritual being which it is his ultimate destiny to become,” has been vividly and in all its varied aspects and fluctuations given a dramatic form in Thémis’s mystery play, *Demeter and Persephone*.

In the words of the poet the story is simply told: “Persephone, daughter of Demeter and Zeus, is carried off by Pluto, God of the Underworld, with Zeus’ consent, when she goes to pluck the narcissus-flower, grown especially for the occasion by Gaia, the Earth-Goddess, at Zeus’ behest. Pluto makes her his queen and keeps her as his prisoner. Demeter in deep sorrow searches for her everywhere and, roaming over the earth in her grief, she arrives at Eleusis. Here, the three daughters of Keleos take her to their home where she heals their little brother and is engaged by Metaneira, their mother, to tend him. Wishing to make the child immortal, she rubs him with ambrosia every night and puts him in

Shalt ever send thy life along with mine
From buried grain thro' springing blade. .

By altering the ancient Greek myth, Thémis has invested it with a wholly spiritual significance. The play "Demeter and Persephone" is a remarkable achievement of the creative imagination. Harold Bloom has called Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound", "Surely the sweetest and most urbane Apocalypse in literature." In "Prometheus Unbound", men, women and even the vegetable kingdom undergo a sea-change.

Here is Shelley's vision of the Apocalypse.

The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the King
Over himself, just, gentle, wise: but man...

(Prometheus Unbound, Act III)

Both "Prometheus Unbound" and Thémis's "Demeter and Persephone" are beautiful lyrical dramas, cosmic in their scope and setting and the actors live and move in super-terrestrial planes. Both the plays are meant to take place in some future time. What happens on earth is a shadow of what happens in the occult planes. The Dhritarashtrians had been slain even before a single arrow was shot. In "Demeter and Persephone" it is no mere temporary victory of the Spiritual Powers but a complete transformation of the forces of Darkness such as hate, egoism and narrow selfishness into their divine truths.

Here too the life on earth will be "a home of the wonderful" and "beatitude's kiss". This is the vision of the future in the mystery play, "Demeter and Persephone":

And you my friends who have been faithful, true,
Shall all be filled with light. Her joy shall flow
Within our hearts, her Love's deep rapture thrill
Our every vein

And then,

Ah, all the walls will break, we shall be one. ...
My vision *will* come true.

And,

The Dragon black that lay for ages coiled
Around our Castle woke and spread its wings
And in one flame of gold soared into Heaven.

The play is full of lyrical charm and loving tenderness. The poetry of the play permeates the stage-directions given in minute detail. Here is Pluto meeting Demeter: "Pluto sits gazing steadily at the cave-entrance. Slowly a few deep chords of music drift in and a bright white light fills the aperture. Then a melody as of heavens opening, and Demeter stands there in a gloriole..."

Lines like

An anguished yearning rises from the deeps,
And voices call me from the dark abyss

or

Pale shadowy faces gazing from the depths

go home straight. Says Demeter,

How all things live and speak and throb with love,
How radiant beauty smiles from every heart,
As all grows in and knows its inmost truth.
I have lifted all the veils and all things shine,
And breathe delight from my transmuting touch,
Thy realm of pale illusions fades away,
Revealing the gold reality it bears.

Demeter implores Pluto:

Release Persephone, my beloved Child,
The world's bright Soul, its beauty, life,
Its seed of Truth, and all our Joy and Love,
Give her now back to me, to all the earth,
That there be spring-time on the earth once more.
Arise, Zeus of the Underworld, arise, (*she touches him*)
Return in love and show thy face divine
For this did I pass through Hell's agony,
And come down here, that thou mightst change at last.

And Pluto replies to Demeter,

Demeter, thy sweet touch unveils my truth;
Behold me now, and look upon my realm...
Her beauty and her love have worked through aeons,
Refining, purifying everything,
Turning our dark to light, our pain to joy ..
For thou hast broken all the iron chains,

And crossed the streams of falsehood, sorrow, death,
And brought deliverance to my world and me
From the long aeonic binding in the Night.

Matthew Arnold at the end of his Sonnet "Austerity of Poetry" writes—

Such, poets, is your bride, the Muse! young, gay,
Radiant, adorned outside, a hidden ground
Of thought and of austerity within

Such is the muse of Thémis the playwright and the superb lyricist, rich in colour and splendour but never sumptuous and extravagant.

RAVINDRA KHANNA

KARTHIKA LAMPS

KARTHIKA lamps look like stars,
That came down to earth,
To play with the children,
Oh, what a surprise!
Oh, what a beauty!!

GOPI (R. MURUGAVEL)

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of February 1996)

It was when Sri Aurobindo was staying in Shankar Chetty's house that he fasted for about 23 days just as an experiment. Moni and Bijoy were the only persons who observed the situation. They report that Sri Aurobindo attended his daily routine without interruption, such as, writing, meditation, walking, etc.

There are two talks of Sri Aurobindo's with a disciple later on, as follows:

Disciple: "Is it possible to do without food?"

Sri Aurobindo: "Yes, it is. When I did my fast of about twenty-three days in Chetty's house, I very nearly solved the problem. I could walk eight hours a day as usual. I continued my mental work and Sadhana as usual and I found that I was not in the least weak at the end of twenty-three days. But the flesh began to grow less and I did not find a clue to replacing the very matter reduced in the body. Also, when I broke the fast, I did not observe the rule of people who undergo long fasts—beginning with a little food and so on. I began with the same quantity as I used to take before.... I tried fasting once in jail but that was for ten days when I used to sleep once in three nights. I lost ten pounds in weight but I felt stronger at the end of the ten days than I had been before I began the fast. I could lift up a weight after the fast, which I could not before."

Disciple: "How is such fasting possible?"

Sri Aurobindo: "One draws the energy from the vital plane instead of depending upon physical substance. Once in Calcutta I lived for a long time on rice and banana. These make a very good food."¹

In April 1911, Sri Aurobindo moved to another house belonging to Raghava Chetty in rue St. Louis. He lived there for full two years.

"During the year 1911 Motilal Roy, who had looked after Sri Aurobindo in Chandernagore, visited Pondicherry and stayed for a month and a half. He had received certain instructions including a Mantra, from Sri Aurobindo and his first visit was an occasion for further communication in Sadhana. It was arranged that he would meet Sri Aurobindo twice a week, entering the house from the backdoor to avoid suspicion. Motilal undertook to secure and provide financial aid to the household on his return. He had also received instructions from Sri Aurobindo to organise a *devasangha*, a spiritual community participating in all the fields of life but from a spiritual basis and spiritual objective. Motilal's project of Prabartaka Sangha was a concrete result of this guidance and lead received by him from Sri Aurobindo. This association between Sri Aurobindo and Motilal Roy, however, did not proceed beyond 1928, for things with Motilal took a different turn and Sri Aurobindo was obliged to withdraw from the Chandernagore experiment."

"The household set-up continued to be the same, with the inmates doing

the cooking by turn. The economic condition was stringent, with one bath towel serving for everybody including Sri Aurobindo who had his bath last and used the same towel as the others had. He gave lessons to Nolini and Moni in Latin, Greek, French. Sri Aurobindo seems to have had an intention of returning to the scene of political work once he obtained the desired base in Sadhana. In the mean time, the First World War broke out. Meanwhile, efforts of the British police to capture Sri Aurobindo continued. They had succeeded in getting Nanda Gopal and a leading politician Stevedore of Pondicherry to participate in a plot to kidnap Sri Aurobindo with the help of bands of local goondas and take him to British territory where some fabricated charges could be foisted and he arrested. But as it always happened in similar cases concerning him, this information reached Sri Aurobindo. The young men around him armed themselves with acid bottles in order to resist and prevent forcible entrance into the house. None turned up, however, on the expected night. It was learnt subsequently that Nand Gopal, who headed the plot, was about to be arrested on a political charge on a warrant issued by his opponents in power and he escaped to Madras to avoid being arrested.”²

During that period another attempt was made which was less crude and more ingenious. The circumstances were described by A. B. Purani afterwards:

“When Sri Aurobindo was in the St. Louis house the French police came and searched it. The circumstances were as follows. Many political refugees and revolutionaries from British India had crossed over as refugees to Pondicherry because it was a French territory. Before the First World War, the French generally looked upon the English as rivals and they jealously asserted the right of giving asylum to political workers who were against the British rule in India. V. V. S. Aiyar, the revolutionary, Subramanya Bharati, the patriot-poet, and Srinivasachari were already there in 1910. Then Nagaswamy Aiyar came, and from Bengal Sri Aurobindo and four other persons. V. V. S. Aiyar being implicated in revolutionary activity came in the year 1912. The British government, in consequence, increased the number of its secret agents, C.I.D. men, in Pondicherry.

“In July 1912 some secret service men threw a tin containing seditious literature into the well of V. V. S. Aiyar’s house. As the British agents could not openly act in French territory, they employed Mayuresan, a French Indian, to complain against Bharati and other patriots, alleging that they were engaged in dangerous activities and that, if a search of their house was made, proof of the complaint would be found. He had not mentioned Sri Aurobindo by name but as Bharati, V. V. S. Aiyar and Srinivasachari were friends of Sri Aurobindo, the French government included his name on a list of those whose houses were to be searched.

“But the scheme of the secret agents fell through because the tin came up from the well when V. V. S. Aiyar’s maid-servant drew water. Bharati went to

Sri Aurobindo immediately and asked his advice. Sri Aurobindo told him to inform the French police and to ask them to come and see the tin to find what it contained. The French government took charge of the tin and found that it contained seditious pamphlets and journals. On some there was the image of Kali and some writing in Bengali. The suspicion was supposed to be created that all these refugees were carrying on correspondence with Shyamji Krishna Varma, Madame Cama and other leaders of the revolutionary movement in Europe and were trying to hatch an Indian conspiracy with their help.

“The investigating magistrate who came to search Sri Aurobindo’s house was one M. Nandot, who arrived with the chief of police and the public prosecutor. He found practically no furniture in the house, only a few trunks, a table and a chair. On opening the drawers of the table he found only books and papers. On some of the papers Greek was written. He was very much surprised and asked if Sri Aurobindo knew Greek. When he came to know that he knew Latin, Greek and other European languages, his suspicion waned, yielding place to a great respect for Sri Aurobindo. He invited Sri Aurobindo to meet him in his chambers later and Sri Aurobindo complied with his request.”³

The financial state of the household is well portrayed in Sri Aurobindo’s letter to Motilal Roy, dated July 3, 1912:

“Your money (by letter and wire) and clothes reached safely. The French Post Office here has got into the habit (not yet explained) of not delivering your letters till Friday; that was the reason why we wired to you thinking you had not sent the money that week. I do not know whether this means anything,—formerly we used to get your letters on Tuesday, afterwards it came to Wednesday, then Thursday and finally Friday. It may be a natural evolution of French Republicanism. Or it may be something else. I see no signs of the seals having been tampered with, but that is not an absolutely sure indication of security. The postman may be paid by the police. Personally, however, I am inclined to believe in the Republican administration theory,—the Republic always likes to have time on its hands. Still, if you like, you can send *important* communications to any other address here you may know of, for the present (of course by French post and a Madrasi address). All others should come by the old address,—you may be sure, I think, no letter will be actually intercepted on this side. By the way, please let us know whether Mr. Banomali Pal received a letter by French post from Achari enclosing another to Parthasarathi.

“I have not written all this time because I was not allowed to put pen to paper for some time,—that is all. I send enclosed a letter to our Marathi friend. If he can give anything for me, please send it without the least delay. If not, I must ask you to procure for me by will-power or any other power in heaven or on earth Rs. 50 at least as a loan. If you cannot get it elsewhere, why not apply to Barid Babu? Also, if Nagen is in Calcutta, ask him whether the Noakhali gentleman can let me have anything. I was told he had Rs. 300 put aside for me if

I wanted it; but I did not wish to apply to him except in case of necessity. The situation just now is that we have Rs. 1½ or so in hand. Srinivas also is without money. As to Bharati living on nothing means an uncertain quantity. The only other man in Pondicherry whom I could at present ask for help is absent *sine die* and my messenger to the South has not returned. The last time he came, he brought a promise of Rs. 1000 in a month and some permanent provision afterwards, but the promise like certain predecessors has not yet been fulfilled and we sent him for cash. But though he should have been here three days ago, he has not returned and even when he returns, I am not quite sure about the cash and still less sure about the sufficiency of the amount. No doubt, God will provide, but He has contracted a bad habit of waiting till the last moment. I only hope He does not wish us to learn how to live on a minus quantity like Bharati.

“Other difficulties are disappearing. The case brought against the Swadeshis (no one in this household was included in it although we had a very charmingly polite visit from the Parquet and Juge d’Instruction) has collapsed into the nether regions and the complainant and his son have fled from Pondicherry and become, like ourselves, ‘political refugees’ in Cuddalore. I hear he has been sentenced by default to five years imprisonment on a false accusation, but I don’t know yet whether the report is true. The police were to have left at the end of Pondicherry* but a young lunatic (one of Bharati’s old disciples in patriotism and atheism) got involved in a sedition-search (for the Indian Sociologist of all rubbish in the world!) and came running here in the nick of time for the police to claim another two months’ holiday in Pondichery. However, I think their fangs have been drawn. I may possibly send you the facts of the case for publication in the *Nayak* or any other paper, but I am not yet certain.

“I shall write to you about Sadhana etc. another time.

Kali”⁴

Why did Sri Aurobindo sign his letters to Motilal Roy from Pondicherry as Kali?

It was, in fact, a development of the Krishna-Kali experience of his in Alipore jail.

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

References

- 1 *Evening Talks*, by A B Purani, pp 232-33
- 2 *Sri Aurobindo*, by M. P Pandit, pp 188-89
- 3 *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, by A B Purani, pp 149-50
- 4 *Ibid* , pp 150-52

* The beginning of this sentence, reproduced here as it appears in Sri Aurobindo’s manuscript, should probably read “The police were to have left Pondicherry at the end of the month ”

MUSINGS ON PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

(Continued from the issue of February 1996)

The Runner

HERE in this Time-eternity, time is the enemy. One, two, three—years merge into each other, the decades run past us so quickly that we do not know when the middle point passes and we are left standing on the western verge with the sunset of life imminent.

With each passing year our understanding grows, the vision becomes clearer, the goal is seen more clearly, the path is more amenable. Alas! When everything in us is ready to welcome our Lover and Master—thoughts, feelings and emotions are purified, aspiration heightened, will fortified—then the body falters. We glimpse the inevitable death waiting in the wings. But is it a matter for regret? Time has different dimensions, durations and qualities on different planes. Even if we could contact our soul for one moment, if we could pass some seconds at the feet of our Lord, then the waiting of centuries would become supremely worthwhile.

On November 22, 1913, the Mother wrote in her diary:

A few minutes passed in silence before Thee are worth centuries of felicity....

Grant, O Lord, that all shadows may be dispelled and that I may be more and more Thy faithful servant in constancy and serenity. Before Thee may my heart be pure as a pure crystal, so that wholly it may reflect Thee.

Oh! the sweetness of abiding in silence before Thee. ..

The secret key to union with our Lord is to achieve an intense silence so that we may hear the sweet footfall of our Lord. He may be, or rather is, very near. It is the constant din of our thoughts and desires and premises that covers His delicate Light. If we could achieve inner silence then he would reveal himself. So there is no cause for us to lose hope or courage. Even if at the fag-end of life he revealed himself for a moment, every failure would be rewarded, all frustration would be compensated. And the Omniscient Divine knows our yearning and, being just, he would fulfil our want. One day he will stand before us unveiled. This being so, nothing has been or is futile or in vain. Then let us try to serve the Lord more and more faithfully, *in constancy and serenity*. The secret of *siddhi* lies in being serene, to do all that we have to do calmly and perfectly. This perfection in acts would make us a pure crystal, capable of reflecting the Lord faithfully. Such should be our endeavour that nothing except the Lord might be reflected through us and that would be true felicity indeed.

Let us aspire for silence, cultivate silence, and pray for silence. In silence is hidden the key to all perfections.

SHYAM KUMARI

THE EXPLOITATION OF THE WIFE AND THE MOTHER

WHAT would one say to the person who at first digs out the roots of a tree and then waters its trunk and branches? The reader will smile at this simplistic question and say, "Except for some rare moron, who would be such a fool? We human beings know better." Reader! please take off that smug smile from your face because there is a ninety percent chance that you are one such fool. The tree is your family and the roots are your mother and your wife who is the mother of your children.

Over much of the world women are being systematically and cruelly incapacitated by the male-dominated society, much more so in India. Impossible physical and emotional demands are being made on them by the insatiable male-ego. They would have to possess multiple arms and be multi-faceted geniuses to satisfy the demands of a modern husband and his family. Little do these foppish males, strutting on the stage of life, know that they are killing their own roots—their mothers, because the Indian *shastras* say that one's wife is also one's mother since she nurtures one's seed in her womb and therefore is the mother of oneself in the form of one's child.

The exploitation of women has been a fact throughout recorded history, some small exceptions might have been there but they are so rare that we can take this constant, cruel exploitation as a rule without exception.

Now a breaking-point has been reached, the proverbial last straw has been added to the load. Large sections of women in the third world, of which Garhwal in India is a shocking example, spend half their lives walking great distances to fetch water and firewood, causing further depletion of their already meagre energy. The nexus between politicians, bureaucrats and contractors has denuded mother earth of its life-giving bounties. These criminals never pause to think of the harm they are doing to the ecosystem of mother earth, of the damage to our nation's forest wealth, of the misery to which they are subjecting these hapless women who have no say in things. Due to indiscriminate cutting of the trees, water sources are drying up and every day women have to walk greater distances to get a few pots of water, water which is not even always fit for consumption. I remember my trekking 500 miles to Gangotri and Yamunotri 50 years back, when hundreds of waterfalls cascaded with their waters flowing across the narrow hill-tracks with sun's rays spinning rainbows, when I easily walked across such a rainbow and made a fetish of washing a silk handkerchief in the waters of every such stream. I remember counting more than 200 of them. Today all those ample crystalline water-sources are dry. I also remember a childhood visit to the hill station Nainital, where I never saw any soil: each inch of the earth was covered with dense vegetation. The Naini Lake where one could clearly see the bottom up to 3 or 4 metres, the Ganges at Haridwar, with waters so transparent that we could see the coins lying on the river-bed clearly, are lost to us forever.

Instead, we have a Garhwal denuded of its green cover and life-giving streams. The men from the Garhwal hills migrate to the plains and their mothers and wives are left there to search barren slopes for fuel and fodder. These selfish men never realise that by exploiting their women, they are exploiting their children too. If the mother is weak the child, even the male-child who is like a demi-god in India, will be weak. Thus the men of the world are gradually weakening the race and by denuding nature endangering the life on earth.

Throughout the known history of our present civilization, woman, in general, chose to be like the soft generous Ganges, which gives its bounty to all, without making any distinction between those who worshipped her, tried to keep her clean and those who sullied her through ignorance *i.e.* like the villagers who urinate, defecate, wash their clothes and bathe their animals in waters which they sincerely believe to be sacred or the devout Hindus who throw the ashes of the dead and even half-burnt or unburnt bodies in her waters or those who with deadly carelessness or avarice let the affluents from their factories flow in her life-sustaining stream, and yet call her Mother Ganges or the Holy Ganges. But those pure waters of the Ganges, which for millions of years had such a regenerating and purifying power that no bacteria could flourish in them, have now become a cesspool, hazardous to drink, at some places unsafe even for bathing. This misuse has increased dramatically during the past hundred years. I still remember the days when we bathed hundreds of times in those limpid waters without ever soaping ourselves. We never washed our clothes near the stream. Soap was not to be allowed to pollute the waters of Mother Ganges or for that matter any other stream. Surely the general uneducated Indian was unaware of the harmful chemicals in soaps but the ancient Indian genius had decreed it should be so and we followed the tradition. Half a century back the environmental awareness that we have today was not there. The knowledge behind the traditions like the worship of the Pipal tree was lost. Yet following the ancient tradition Indians went round the Pipal tree trunk putting around it a few strands of hand-woven thread. Great care had to be taken that the thread should not get entangled or get broken. Thus the devotees walked slowly and had to be under the tree for quite some time for the ritual which included watering the tree with milk and water. To cut a Pipal tree was prohibited, it was considered to be a crime. Today modern science has revealed that the Pipal tree gives far more oxygen than any ordinary tree. The ancients wedded all these scientific practices to religion, making them a part of the psyche of the race. But in modern times we have killed the life-giving capacity of the Ganges, and we have cut down with impunity millions of Pipal and Banyan trees. In the same way we are killing our mothers by making impossible demands on them

Fifty years back there was some justice for women in India. Though they had their wings clipped and were confined to their homes, still they were, *in general*, neither burnt by their husbands nor treated barbarically. I will take the

case of my mother. She could read scriptures, could sing some simple songs and dance in women's functions pirouetting once or twice. She cooked simple North Indian dishes, did some simple sewing and sequin embroidery, spun old cotton to get woven into bed-spreads and like most women in those days knew how to treat the family with home remedies. She was attractive yet not beautiful. She did not know typing, driving, cycling or swimming. After entering her teens she never wore any other dress except a sari or rarely a long skirt for ceremonious occasions. Except for some occasions, when she helped select some costly silk saris for a marriage in the family, she never did any shopping. Whatsoever dress my father or her parents gave her was accepted happily. Life in those days was full of physical labour in the absence of cooking-gas, refrigerators and mixies, etc. In addition to the household work religious practices took on an average three to four hours of the day of all the women in our family. My paternal great-grandfather and maternal grandfather devoted even more time to worship. Therefore with a large number of children to send to school, with having to cook on open firewood stoves in the mornings and evenings, her sari would be crumpled and streaked with the yellow of the turmeric powder and the soot of the wood-fire. Cooking was done sitting on the floor and there was no chance of looking glamorous. Thus my father, a lawyer, saw her in a dishevelled state till he left for the court. In the afternoon, having finished their chores for the day, all the ladies would oil and comb their long hair, put on *bindi* and a clean sari, visit each other, embroider or gossip or rest. But before my father and uncles returned from court, my mother and her sisters-in-law would again change into the crumpled saris which they had worn for cooking and would start the evening meal. Rarely did my father or uncles see their wives well-dressed. Going out or visiting together was rare. Ladies went out with other ladies to the same function or celebration to which the males went separately. They ate separately too.

My mother was not even a matriculate. Yet for her simple talents she was widely loved and revered in the family and was considered an accomplished and wise woman. Due to repeated child-bearing she became somewhat heavy but once a woman was married nobody censured her for becoming fat. It was accepted by the society that some men as well as some women become fat. It did not make any difference in the love of the fat persons' spouses. This was the position of a majority of middle-class women.

Let us now compare the position of modern women point by point. First, the matter of looks. Under the influence of modern films and TV, males all over the world expect their wives to look like Sridevi or Marilyn Monroe. These perpetually gyrating men and women of song-and-dance numbers on the screen have such a vitriating effect on the male psyche that men would like their wives to dress as alluringly as a film star or a prostitute. No modern middle-class man in India would tolerate a woman as unkempt as my mother and aunts and most other women were for most of the day. They are expected to be dressed up like a

siren all the time. The loving relationship between man and woman, where sex was a by-product of love, often turns now into a sexual relationship, where love rarely exists or is totally lost. The mutual respect and love has been replaced by the domination of animal male sexuality which is becoming more pronounced with each generation thanks to the heavy metal music, drugs, explicit exhibitionism in print, audio and video medias. The modern male wants his wife to be enticing throughout the day. She should never be dishevelled or grubby, while he himself is degenerating in the unclean hippie ethos of dress. The half-dressed males who stand on the street with their lungs upturned displaying their hairy legs and ugly protruding tummies never think what their wives would feel about them. They never pause to think how different are they from the dashing, overdressed, dare-devil heroes who chase heroines in Indian films, yet they expect the beauty and perfection of those celluloid goddesses of the screen from simple wives who earn their living as maid-servants, or from the overworked, harassed, cash-strapped lower middle-class mothers, or the overblown rich ladies who have no outlet for spending the extra calories they eat. There are so many divorces of the wives who have become fat or have lost their looks. Has anybody ever heard of an Indian woman divorcing her husband even when he becomes obnoxiously fat or has lost his looks due to some illness or accident?

India is probably the only country where films have made such a great impression on the psyche of the viewers that passionate admirers resort to self-immolations if their hero-turned-politician god gets jailed by his political rivals. Some years back some admirers of an actor immolated themselves when he was jailed for one day! In Tamilnadu images of a certain actress and a particular male star have been installed in several temples. Their worshippers and admirers are the poor and uneducated masses, the rickshaw-pullers, the rag-pickers, the daily wage-earners in the unorganised sector, the vendors or the hawkers—who generally are pitiable physical specimens, dressed in outlandish rags, yet who sell their blood to bloodbanks or hospitals to be able to see their heroes on the screen paying fifty times the value of a cinema ticket, in the first show of a film. And these are the people who beat, sometimes to death, their wives who work as maids, for not being soft, sweet and alluring like the glamorous heroines they so admire.

A great moral degeneration is caused by the very familiar, all too often used, scenario in Indian films, where the hero strays from the straight path and is happily enmeshed in the magic of some other woman, and the long-suffering wife by her superhuman forbearance, patience and self-sacrifice wins him back to her arms, sometimes after her youth is gone, or children are grown up. This insidious, incredibly naive and unrealistic approach has subconsciously legitimised in the eyes of Indian males their extramarital proclivities. Half a century back the extramarital affairs about which most men in their early youth used to fantasize and only some rich ones indulged in with great circumspection, left the

wife at least the dignity of her ignorance by hiding their escapades from her. Due to this pernicious trend in the films, now they indulge themselves openly and aggressively, leaving no way out of the shame of it for their wives. Shame it is, because when a man cheats his wife, the first reaction of our society to such a situation is that there must be something lacking in the self-giving or the character of the woman concerned. A *sati*, a chaste woman, should put up with all tyranny. The society never pauses to think how a simple girl brought up in the strictest puritan atmosphere can suddenly turn into a siren.

This hypocrisy would be amusing if it were not so tragic. My father was a strict disciplinarian and believed in simple living. He himself followed this ideal. Yet after marriage we, his daughters, were expected to change our psychology and characters overnight to become spruced-up coquettes for the benefit of the animality in our husbands. I have nothing against a natural efflorescence of beauty, the desire to look attractive to the person whom one loves, which comes naturally in the flush of love and is not overdone. The modern films have made it almost compulsory for decent young ladies to dress like hussies.

Once, after my marriage, I presented my younger unmarried sister with a tiara of satin flowers to adorn her hair. She was fourteen and one day proudly wore it as we were going for an outing. We were already in our phaeton when my father returned from court and as soon as he saw my sister with that tiara on, his eyes became red with anger. He asked us girls to come down for a moment, beckoned us in, for he did not want to create a scene in front of my husband, and then in a very severe tone asked my sister to take off that tiara. She trembled and did so. Four years later when her future husband came to see her she dressed simply and acted simply. Afterwards, my father complained to my mother that their daughters did not know how to dress and be attractive. I remembered the satin tiara and the strict protocol we had to follow. This was pure hypocrisy. Readers will pardon me this digression.

The present era has drastically changed the content of marriage. Previously marriage meant love and responsibility, today it means sex and frivolity. The Indian films and the modern literature have killed love by making it a synonym for unbridled sex. Caring and sharing have been replaced by wooing and enticing. Man has identified himself with his sexual urge and woman has been typified as an object of carnal desire. The male's ego has been inflated to such an extent that he is imperceptibly but inexorably being pushed into a mind-frame which expects his simple wife to be an all-forgiving *Kannagi* or *Anusuya*, forgetting that goddesses and saints are a rare phenomenon. He feels secure in the fact that if and when he wants he can return after his escapades to the bosom of his loving and chaste wife whom he expects to patiently wait at home for years for her husband's return. And if he returns from his escapade, he thinks much of himself for being such a good chap and expects welcome and special efforts to keep him happy and satisfied for has he not renounced so much extramarital pleasure?

Extensive research in America has proved that except for the rare exception it is impossible for a woman to change a depraved man by her love and caring and sacrifice. There is a greater chance of her being battered, tortured or done to death. Girls are being warned by psychiatrists never to fall in the trap of thinking, "I can change him." In India it is not so bad but the point of no return is approaching fast when the males may find themselves impaled on the trident of Durga. The suppressed women may ask themselves, "Is such a low, vulgar and cruel person worth the sacrifice?" These modern males may find one day nowhere to return to. The ego of the modern male has skyrocketed so much that he naturally expects women to be subservient and pliable to his pleasure. Pleasure is the password now. Even a thousand women would not suffice for a male ego; if he had means, like Akbar he would have a different woman each night throughout his life. The modern man has turned into a carnal animal, in heat in season and out of season, who covets each woman who has a desirable body. O what curse has turned into animals our husbands, brothers and sons!

Today, in addition to beauty and allures, they expect their wives to be able to cook Madrasi, Bengali, Gujarati and Chinese dishes. Woe to the girl who cannot make perfect dosas, idlis, dhoklas and Chinese curry and a hundred more dishes. She has to be expert in some art, preferably two; she has to have a professional training and work and earn. On top of it all, the tasks which previously the males did, *i.e.* shopping and taking the kids to school, have also been pushed on her overburdened shoulders. The modern woman, educated or uneducated, is a harassed and exploited person, at least in India. She is expected to earn a living yet to do all the chores at home.

When will this exploitation stop? Only when the women will stand up and fight for their rights, when they will not consider themselves inferior to men in any way, when they will be financially independent and insist on being treated as equals.

Self-sacrifice by women has brought them to this sad pass, self-assertion will save them and humanity as well. For men the burden of worship by women has been terrible. Had the male child been taught by his mother from his early years to treat his sisters as equals, he would have developed into a better and more just human being. The inequality, the selfishness and the cruelty that plague humanity have their origin in the first years of a male child where the parents deprive themselves and discriminate against their daughters to favour him. This makes boys selfish and they begin to expect a larger slice of life than their due. By giving dignity to herself, her daughter and daughter-in-law a woman can do immense good to her own self and her male counterpart.

The day women will learn to respect themselves and hold themselves at least equal to men, an age of harmony and justice will dawn.

TWO POEMS

THE PLAY OF NATURE

SEE, she is but a beautiful flower
In wonderful spring-time's bloom
That the dew in the morning hour
Enfolds in a misty gloom.

See, this is but a tree on a mountain
Remembering good old days
When water-nymphs played by a fountain
And fauns danced across the ways.

See, this is but Nature's play with the Future,
Attracting her Lord into time
To make Him her child and to nurture
His image in a mystic shrine.

THE TROGLODYTES

The troglodytes of Nature's little ways
Create their kingdom with work-tool's steady beats
From which the energy of the Life-God leaps
To brighten her tender earth-beloved face.

Making a pastime of bringing up some flower,
Spending their might on the shaping of a stone,
Straining to work out the great One's wish alone,
The Mother's Love in their agile hands is power.

Filling the world-scene with hammer's noise and strife,
Their hard labour's outcome is a beautiful life.

ULI

AMONG THE NOT SO GREAT—III

MRIDUBHASHINI (Mridu-di)

ONCE upon a time there was a “Prasad House”. Walk along the North footpath of the Ashram on what we, by long usage, know as the “Old Balcony Road”. On the opposite side you will see a construction marked as “Prasad House” It is a new building that has for our convenience and some remaining sentiments usurped that name. The building is crammed with piles of papers and dog-eared files, and some computers and their masters—all trying to keep track of where all the money flies—*i.e.* “accounts”. In an age gone by, in this place stood an old charming little house—The Prasad House. It was indeed house to real ‘Prasads’ (in the truest sense) and the Prasad-maker—Mridubhashini (or simply Mridu-di) along with her old cranking-up-type gramophone and discs, numerous stoves (13 if I remember right), delightfully tasty khichuri, rasagollas etc. and lastly walls festooned with Sri Aurobindo’s writings to Mridu-di, all framed. What a change—or what a fall!!

Mridu-di, born in Bengal in 1901, was widowed when quite young—a nasty experience at any age and time, much worse in those days. But she struggled through much and arrived here in 1930 and found a haven at the feet of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Mridu-di, like the two previous ‘not-so-greats’, was a big person, but only in two dimensions *i.e.* width and depth (girth). She sadly lacked the height. She was maybe 1m 40cm tall and almost a metre across! Always dressed in a white saree, the “anchal” (the loose end of the saree) covering her head, as with many Bengali and Oriya ladies still (the custom seems to be losing its foot-hold, rather head-hold. Maybe it will make a come-back as a new fashion), she waddled along from the Ashram to her house giving everyone she met a genuine happy smile from amid two big cheeks. The eyes joined in for good measure. Understandably she wheezed a bit Her voice usually stood on the higher octaves—very effective for most occasions. The mind was of the simplest nature, but could be adamant once it chose to be. Still this was only the mind, the ripples on the surface What lay in the depths? Maybe we can venture a guess when we have seen a little more of her.

I was introduced to her within a few days of my arrival here. My brother Narayan, a veteran of a year here, saw to it. For, knowing her put you in line for some rewards—that Prasad. And, what a Prasad! It came—as we used to say—from “Up”—meaning from the Mother or Sri Aurobindo. Mridu-di was a great cook, one of the greatest, for she cooked for the Lord for 16 years. She would make choice dishes for Him and He had no choice but to have them, at least taste them. Once it happened that He did not partake of some dish, and she came to know of it. Someone had thoughtlessly informed her that Sri Aurobindo

had not tasted one of her dishes. She was grief-stricken and expressed it in no uncertain terms. The 'informer' was told "knowing Mridu, you should have kept mum about the dish". The Lord had to personally console her, as you would a small child. Sometimes she would even tell Sri Aurobindo that she would commit suicide. He would say, "No, no, Mridu Who will give me luchi then?" Sometimes, she would bow down to Him, and demand He place His right foot, or left foot, on her bowed head

Many children, including my brother and I, would work ourselves into her good books, and get invited to her house. She was all smiles and prattled on and on in her high pitched voice and took us to her kitchen. Therein were ranged rows of stoves, vessels and ladles. They did not interest us. What we went for was kept in small cups—the Prasad. It was some khichuri, or a sweet that Sri Aurobindo had tasted. She gave a bit to each of us. We ran home happy and more blessed than we ever realised. But it was not always that she gave Prasad. She could easily be teased. Some like Amarendra did just that, for the fun of it. Then—no Prasad. One could not even approach her house. He, Amarendra, would accost her in the street at an odd hour (maybe 10 or 11 a.m.) and plead, "Mridu-di, please some Prasad". She would say, "Na, na, ekhun na" (no, no, not now). He would insist and follow close on her heels. She would scream at him—yet he would follow her. In desperation she would raise the pitch of her scream and call "Nolini-babu, Nolini-babu!" Amarendra and whoever was his accomplice would run—only to repeat if possible the whole scene or leave it for another day. Why did she shout for Nolini-da? For some unfathomable reason she was unquestioningly obedient to him and looked up to him. The following drama proves the above statement but leaves us further bewildered

The drama unfolds in the days when the Mother came every day to the Playground. At 7.15 p.m. the Mother came out of Her room and stood in front of the map of India for the March Past. The March Past, then, was well attended. All the groups (from the youngest to the oldest) took part—every day! After the March Past all the other groups except the elders—group H—dispersed. Group H continued their 1/2 hour of gym-marching. Then followed the Concentration followed by groundnut distribution. On this particular day, just about 7.15 p.m., all the groups stood ready for the March Past. The Mother was ready to come out from Her room. In came Mridu-di, puffing and panting. She was sorely disturbed, full of indignation and frustration. She came and plumped down on the door-step of the Mother's room. The door was effectively barricaded, the Mother could not come out. We all stood ready outside and the Mother stood inside and Mridu-di sat in between, immovable. Half an hour passed. Several people, Pranab-da, Puraniji etc. tried to plead, cajole, convince Mridu-di to move. Nothing doing. Finally the Mother came out of the other smaller door (side room) and the March Past started off. Mridu-di had not budged. Then—someone hit on the idea of calling in Nolini-da. Nolini-da came through the

Guest House, looked at Mridu-di, said in a normal tone and volume, “Mridu, chalo,” turned round and started back towards the Guest House, without even a backward glance!! Wonder of wonders, Mridu-di got up and followed Nolini-da out—just like that—not a squeal of protest, regret, nothing. Quite an inexplicable denouement. What had happened to her and how did it un-happen? Maybe someone can give the answers. Such incidents were rare. Barring them, Mridu-di was the usual jolly fat person, butt end of some of our pranks and remarks. She didn’t always take them lying down. She often took a swing at us. One of her favourite targets was Runu Ganguly. She would call him, “Hey, Burmese” (such were the features he bore) He got pricked and would shout back, “Kumdo” (pumpkin). (To call someone Mridu-di was to condemn him/her to ‘Fatdom’.) But, if anyone went too far, she could always fall back on her shrill call of “Nolini-babu” and scare away Amarendras and the like.

Around 1932 Mridu-di shifted to Prasad House. Earlier she had lived in a house near where Laljibhai lives now. It is from then or a little later that the new house was called Prasad House. A new phase in her life was in the offing. Some time around this period Mridu-di took it into her head that no morsel of food would pass into her mouth until she had the Darshan of the Mother. And, so it happened, an event of great import to all of us. The Mother consented to appear on the “Old” Balcony—so Mridu-di could see Her from her window. Hundreds of others were the beneficiaries. It would almost seem the Gods await some excuse to bless us only if we would keep still and maybe lower our heads and raise our eyes. Maybe Mridu-di was the excuse. The Mother used to appear on the Balcony at 6 or 6.15 a.m. (As time passed the timing varied. The Mother could not make it sometimes even by 10 a.m.) Most Ashramites, and many other devotees, assembled on the street below the Balcony for the Darshan. When the Mother appeared a hush would settle and all eyes turned upwards to let the ‘Sight’ and the lack of sound sink in. But come THE DARSHAN DAYS (21st Feb, 24th April, 15th Aug & 24th Nov) and Mridu-di would give us a special “Audio-treat(ment)”. Her gramophone would be ready, cranked up, and as soon as the Mother appeared, ‘Vande Mataram’ (the song) would crash in on everyone’s ears. This early morning musical dose did not go down well with most. I don’t know if anyone suggested to her to spare our ears from this onslaught. If they had tried, their failure would have been a foregone conclusion. Mridu-di’s convictions were not so easily shaken. Even when the Balcony Darshan was discontinued, Mridu-di would wait upstairs for the Mother to put the first morsel of food into her mouth, before starting her day.

There was once a move to extend Harpagon to include Prasad House. The process was well on the way in spite of Mridu-di’s shrill protests. She could, even would, have been bulldozed. But she at last pulled out her trump-card. She showed a note written by the Lord himself stating “Prasad House is Mridu’s.” All were forced to backtrack – stymied, well and good. The house had a

reprieve. Later, it met a drastic fate, demolished, turned into rubble, a victim of utilitarianism. Up came the present usurper. Happily for Mridu-di she demised before it.

September—1962—Mridu-di was quite herself, active, talking and smiling. But in mid-September, it was observed by some that she no more did an ordinary pranam at the Samadhi. She would almost lie down, press as much of her body as possible on the Samadhi. Someone even remarked that something was happening to her, within her. On 20th evening she chatted with Lallubhai (her good old neighbour) on the footpath, then went to bed as usual. On 21st morning her doors did not open. She did not wake up. She had left us peacefully, quietly, without “protest”. That night of 20th, around 12 Sri Aurobindo had come to the Mother and said “I am taking Mridu.” Thus on a cloud of glory was she taken to her heavenly abode.

Can we now venture the “guess” as to who was Mridu-di? what was she? I still wouldn't. I would rather raise my arms in surrender and my hat in a salute. Rather than question and seek answers about Mridubhashini and her peers, let the wonder of them sink into our minds, and let us bask awhile in the mellow afterglow of their brief sojourn here and their passing.

(To be continued)

PRABHAKAR (BATTI)

APPROACHES AND ACCESS POINTS

SRI AUROBINDO is the supreme finality. For those who choose to practise the Integral Yoga, Sri Aurobindo is the spiritual space—the final frontier. As a frontier He is the supreme flexibility. As the spiritual space He is the highest reality devoid of all or any barriers. He is the extension with infinite extensions that end not in any extinctions; each extension is a marvellous distinction.

No one has known Sri Aurobindo and no one will ever know Him. He is infinite and indefinable. To our great fortune the One who was inaccessible has, out of infinite love for us, emanated and extended Himself to us in matter. He has become approachable and explorable. Yes, He has given us the wonderful opportunity to explore His unfathomable blissful mystery, His marvels of infinite extents. This wonderful opportunity is the creation of the Integral Yoga.

The Integral Yoga is the spiritual space-ship gifted by Sri Aurobindo to the earth. This divine space-ship is on an endless mission of exploring Sri Aurobindo's infinity, seeking His newer and newer worlds, seeking His marvels after marvels that exist as galaxies and galaxies in his spiritual space.

The Integral Yoga is the space-ship that is fully energised by the inexhaustible love of the Mother for Sri Aurobindo and for us. Her aspects are the infallible equipment of this space-ship. Her unfathomable knowledge is its computerised integral section.

Within the sight of this exploring space-ship is the frontier of Supramental worlds which at present appears to be the final mystic frontier, but when we land on the Supramental worlds we will find that the frontier has moved away and has appeared as the Satchitananda worlds. This flexible frontier is the ever shifting illumined border-line which will eternally indicate that marvels in the infinite being of Sri Aurobindo are limitless.

Our biggest advantage is that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother themselves are the captains of this space-ship. They are leading us through and through their "Mystic folds of light", fully bathing us in each "fold". They are journeying us into the great depths of their spiritual space. In these endless voyages of Integral Yoga, the spiritual space-ship, they are taking us to places and spaces where no other Yogas have ever gone.

To make these spiritual voyages adventurous, we may be confronted with critical areas to pass through. We may be encounter unidentified objects that come as obstacles, we may face many unexpected gravitational pulls that may bring us in the scanning orbits of aliens.

In spite of all these seemingly dangerous possibilities, if we go on repeating Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's names, no obstacle would stand in our way, there would be no world that we could not safely explore, no barrier could be dangerous. Aliens will not be in a position to scan us because the light emanating from this space-ship will be much too intense and powerful. In the movement of

the space-ship Integral Yoga is the assurance of Sri Aurobindo because this space-ship is all the Mother. Sri Aurobindo Himself is all that Integral Yoga is and all that it will become by His Will which operates this space-ship.

*

Sri Aurobindo is indefinable because He is the supreme substance with infinite unknown properties. Sri Aurobindo is indefinable because He is the Supreme Consciousness of infinite patterns that are mysterious. Sri Aurobindo is indefinable because He is the infinite love for the Supreme Mother—the love that no creation at any point of time will ever be able to comprehend. Sri Aurobindo is indefinable because His very substance is eternally filled and saturated by the Mother—the Mother who is the mystery that can only be understood to the extent She permits us to understand.

We will never fully be able to know Sri Aurobindo but will always be able to explore His majestic and astonishing wonders indefinitely. True, by identification with Him we may know Him but that would not be equal to our exploration of Him from the perspective of matter—that is, being in a body when we move into His realms.

A part can never know the whole. We are His parts and we will always remain so. However, the whole that is Sri Aurobindo can explore Himself anew through His parts that we are.

*

We belong to Sri Aurobindo, to Him we return. Sri Aurobindo is our future in terms of time in life. In exploring Sri Aurobindo's infinity, we are constantly moving into the future. Returning to Him is a constant endless process—the process which reveals newer and newer marvels to us in our journey back *to Him in Him*. In this process of returning is contained our march forward in a limitless future. Since we belong to Sri Aurobindo, and since Sri Aurobindo is our future, our constant movement into the future is actually our constant endless *return to tomorrow*.

*

For and on earth, Sri Aurobindo's infinite Ananda is divinely programmed to respond in all areas of loving surrender, total trust and constant gratitude, as much as victory is programmed on earth by Sri Aurobindo's Will. Victory's inevitability sends certainties in the form of opportunities to progress towards this infinite Ananda.

The Mother clearly is in every atom of earth because She specifically exists

in earth. It is the Mother's clear and specific existence that makes earth majestic.

On earth's horizon the Mother is the age of beauty—the true power of beauty in the process of revelation.

To concentrate on the Mother in the areas of loving surrender, a total trust and a constant gratitude are the means to activate these areas that press the button which releases the Ananda programmed by the supreme majesty of Sri Aurobindo.

To concentrate on the Mother with love is to welcome the new age of beauty destined to start on earth.

*

Sri Aurobindo's absolute consciousness replaced the Mother's thoughts. The Mother's love longed for Sri Aurobindo's love. In the process of this longing the Mother's love became one with Sri Aurobindo's and lost its identity in Him. Sri Aurobindo absorbed Her love. This absorption caused the growth of an immense gratitude from His heart and by the force of this gratitude He surrendered to the Mother. Now Sri Aurobindo's love is perpetually proceeding into the Mother's love—the process that will never end in time because His love is infinite and inexhaustible. The same are the potentialities of the Mother's love. This march of love began from their grace-filled embodiments and is now spreading in endless space. This love's procession has changed the creative processes. Creative processes now cause new creations that bear the stamp of this grace-filled love.

Sri Aurobindo faces us eye to eye in all states of being, in all modes of activity, in all things, in all worlds. His eyes are spheres of light, bliss and love; they constantly focus on us. Their action awaits our consent for their penetrating action. In general course His eyes transmit messages of His divine mathematics that makes creations in cosmos possible. A true scientist who can open to Him can receive these messages.

The love from His eyes, like a rising tide, while invading the whole being of true aspirants, not only penetrates into surrendered hearts but also overflows all things. Penetrating into surrendered minds His love generates in them a sovereign light of clarity that never wavers. His love generates force and electrifies effective power in all life, effective power that never fails. Sri Aurobindo's Will, His mastering energy, will get established by this love of His which is always proceeding into the Mother. The Mother's love which always surrounds Sri Aurobindo's in infinite intensity is constantly receiving His love but gives an appearance as if His love is receding into Hers.

*

In the clarity of Harmony, Sri Aurobindo's supreme Sun-Face shines with a sovereign smile. In a calm, quiet, happy state, we become aware of His love that helps; the love that His sweet smile radiates. The sunshine smile of Sri Aurobindo is an assurance of His impenetrable protection. May we search for His smile in our hearts, for He is seated there smiling.

JAGAT KAPADIA

BROKEN WINGS

REND, O break this earth, this dross!
Howl, O world, of this great loss!
A desert, an isle, forlorn, forgot—
Fly, my Soul, for gone's thy God!

No more of this despair, these tears,
No more of clashes and of fears,
No more of this long wait in vain:
All here is ever garbed with pain.

How to fly up with broken wings
And sing with joy of earthly things?
Break, my heart—your god is gone,
Fly, my Soul, to another Dawn!

S. M.

A PLUNGE INTO THE UNKNOWN

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE UNEXPECTED

(12)

IN the February issue of the *Bulletin of Physical Education*, 1955, we find some interesting messages of the Mother. One of them is:

To those whose work is to govern or to lead.

When you want to please the people, you let things go as they are, waiting for Nature to impose the progress upon man. But this is not the truth of the creation. The true mission of man is to impose his progress on Nature.

This message was written on 2.12.54—the day on which the annual physical demonstration was to be held in the Ashram Playground. Obviously, this message is two-pronged. On one side it can be applied to political leaders and the government, on the other side it can be applied to all sorts of leaders including the spiritual leaders.

Another message dated 5.1.55 is:

Meditation

We sat together in silence for a few minutes, enjoying the company of our soul, and we witnessed the gates of Eternity opening wide before us.

This message gave me a vision towards a brilliant future which was in the offing; it gave me hope and courage in the midst of my troubles and struggles.

There is always a hope even in the midst of hopelessness. This point is very strongly emphasised in the drama, *The Great Secret*, written by the Mother in collaboration with Nolini, Pavitra, André and Pranab, which was staged on 1.12.54 in the Playground.

Towards the conclusion of the drama the Unknown Man says:

No, it is not too late, it is never too late.

Together let us will in a great aspiration, let us call for an intervention of the Grace. A miracle can always happen. Faith has a sovereign power. And if we are to take part in the great work about to be done, then an intervention will come and prolong our life. Let us pray with the humility of the wise and the simple faith of the child, let us call down with sincerity this

my Pocket Oxford Dictionary that I had with me for the difficult words like 'Paraclete', 'Hippogriff', etc. and then I rested in my easychair meditating. I was almost in a trance or sleep or whatever people may like to call it, for more than half an hour, when suddenly I woke up and in an outburst of inspiration, as in a flash flood, I finished the rest of the poem in a few minutes.

On 26.10.55, the Vijayadashami day, the Mother distributed another poem of Sri Aurobindo—'Rose of God'. This one too I translated on the same day. Of course I kept correcting these translations from time to time.

By 1967 I had translated more than one hundred poems of Sri Aurobindo. Then in a letter to the Mother on 9.10.67 I prayed for the Mother's permission and blessings for publishing these poems in book-form. The Mother answered:

My blessings are with you.

On 31.10.55, Mahalakshmi Puja day, the message was a prayer written by the Mother and translated by Sri Aurobindo:

Mother Divine, thou art with us, each day thou givest me that assurance, and closely united in an identification that grows more and more integral, more and more constant, we turn to the Lord of the universe and to That which is beyond in a great aspiration towards the new Light.

All these messages point to the supramental manifestation that was to occur the next year.

What the Mother distributed on 14.11.55 (Mahakali Puja) was not a message but a 'mantra':

ॐ आनन्दमयि चैतन्यमयि सत्यमयि परमे

in Sri Aurobindo's own handwriting. On receiving this mantra from the Mother's hand I was full of inspiration and wrote a Bengali poem on it the same day.

In the afternoon Dakshinapada (Pranab's father), who was staying in Golconde at that time, and was very affectionate towards me, asked me: "What is the meaning of this message?" I told him, "This is not a message, this is a mantra." Next day, in the afternoon he told me: "This morning I asked the Mother if this was a mantra; she emphatically replied—'Yes this is a mantra'."

On this, questions were also raised in Mother's Playground-class on 16 November, 1955 as follows:

Question: In the prayer you gave us this time for Kali Puja, you have written something in Sanskrit.

The Mother: It is Sri Aurobindo who has written a mantra.

Question: Then why has he written like this?

The Mother: ... It is an evocation. You know what it means? Did you find someone to explain it to you? No? Ah, that's, the first thing you should have done, ask what the meaning of these four words is.

The transcription underneath: there are only two of them. He had begun transcribing and then his paper... it was a tiny little scrap of paper, and there wasn't any more space to write everything; so he stopped.

On the folder, along with this mantra, there was a packet of dried petals of 'Divine's Love' flowers, as well as a Chaldean legend written by the Mother. It is a very interesting story of great significance. For those who have not read it let me quote:

Long, long ago, in the dry land which is now Arabia, a divine being incarnated upon earth to awaken in it the supreme love. As expected it was persecuted by men, misunderstood, suspected, pursued. Mortally wounded by its assailants, it wanted to die quietly in solitude in order to be able to accomplish its work, and being pursued, it ran away. Suddenly, in the vast desert land there appeared a small pomegranate bush. The saviour crept in under the low branches, to leave its body in peace; and immediately the bush spread out miraculously, it grew higher, larger, became deep and thick, so that when the pursuers passed by, they did not even suspect that the One whom they were chasing was hidden there, and they went their way.

While drop by drop the sacred blood fell, fertilising the soil, the bush was covered with marvellous flowers, scarlet, large, crowded with petals... innumerable drops of blood.

These are the flowers which express and contain for us the Divine's Love.

A question was asked in the class as to who was that man, to which the Mother replied:

Who told you that it was a man? I haven't said whether it was a man or woman... It is a prehistoric story, so you cannot find any information about it....

I surmise that the being was the Mother herself. As there is no written document but the Mother knows it and gives out the vivid story as well as the significance of the pomegranate flower, my conviction is redoubled. In her 'Radha's Prayer' and another piece written in Japan she asserts that she was prepared to give her blood 'drop by drop' towards the service of the Lord. I

believe that the story comes from the Mother's psychic memory. We have also heard that both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were born upon earth many a time and had undergone tremendous ordeals.

Then in the Playground class somebody questioned:

Sweet Mother, has that Chaldean legend, which you have written, any relation with Kali Puja?

To which the Mother answered:

Yes, my child, because on Kali Puja day I *always* distribute the flowers of "The Divine's love"; for Kali is the most loving of all the aspects of Mahashakti; hers is the most active and most powerful Love. And that is why every year I distribute the petals of "The Divine's Love" on Kali's Day....

On 24.11.55, the Darshan day which is also called the Victory Day or Siddhi Day, when the Krishna-Consciousness and Force came down into Sri Aurobindo's body, the Mother distributed one of Sri Aurobindo's poems on 'Discoveries of Science':

How shall ascending nature near her goal?
Not through man's stumbling tardy intellect
Patient all forms and powers to dissect
But by the surer vision of his soul....

The Mother's choice of this poem indicated that the time had come when man must surpass his intellect.

This completed all the messages distributed in 1955.

My struggle was continuing. Once I was so depressed that in the evening I did not go to the Playground for Distribution. I was loitering on the seaside footpath when all of a sudden I remembered a song of Tagore's or rather the song was projected to my intellect by my psychic being. This was a very favourite song of mine from Tagore's Bengali *Gitanjali*:

আমি বহু বাসনায
প্রাণপণে চাই
বঞ্চিত ক'বে বাঁচলে মোবে।
এ-কৃপা কঠোব
সঞ্চিত মোব
জীবন ভ'রে।...

The devotee addresses the Lord thus:

“I crave and crave with restless desires. Thou deprivest me and thus depriving savest me. This, Thy stern Grace, has been in store for me throughout my life.” And towards the end the key-words—“It is because Thou wantest me that Thou refuseth me.” As soon as I remembered the song the blackout from my outer mind was lifted and there was all light! I ran to the Playground. The Distribution was not yet over. And the Mother smiled that evening with some extra sweetness! In a flash the Mother could know the state of consciousness of a person the moment he stood before her.

The Mother, in her talks, has said somewhere something like this—I quote from memory—If the Divine chooses to manifest Himself even in the heart of the weakest, who can prevent Him from doing so?

When I read this I felt consoled and reassured. I thought—then I have some hope. My body is not ready to manifest the Lord this time, if my heart can it will be something—O Lord, manifest Thyself in my heart, purify it from all its dross, replace my human will with Thy Divine Will.

From that year the character of my Bengali poems changed. So far they were lyrics and songs. But from that year my reasoning mind took part in the sadhana. My poems became rational rather than emotional. All this happened spontaneously.

Towards the end of 1955, when I faced a severe inner ordeal, I addressed a poem to Janaki (Sita) who faced an ordeal of fire and came out unscathed in all glory, purity and faithfulness to the ideal.

I addressed another poem to the supramental light and force and in all sincerity called it to come down upon earth. I believed with all my heart that this alone could give a solution to my personal problems as well as the problems of the earth. During the evening meditation at the Playground, when the Mother was there, I called to the Supramental day after day and felt myself surcharged with a force from top to bottom.

In the midst of my inner battles this was happening. Sri Aurobindo in *The Synthesis of Yoga* speaks of ‘titanic inner battles’. This sort of inner battles are not necessarily fought by big body-builders, wrestlers, boxers and musclemen. Otherwise why did Sri Aurobindo choose for his Yoga a physically weak person like me? In the same book he asserts—“He who chooses the Infinite has been chosen by the Infinite.” While reading *The Synthesis of Yoga* in her Playground class the Mother explained:

“It is a magnificent sentence! And it is absolutely true... it is God who has chosen you, the Divine who has chosen you. And that is why you run after Him.... And once you are chosen, you are sure of the thing. Therefore, doubts, hesitations, depressions, uncertainties, all this is quite simply a waste of time and energy;... From the moment one has felt just

a national song of India. Nehru nodded Afterwards, he came many times. He got Indira admitted there when I too was a school student. We were almost of the same age but we had different courses to follow and were not classmates. After about two years she left Shantiniketan and went abroad

Wherever Nehru went he spoke; only here in our Ashram we saw a silent Nehru. This was an experience to me. In the Playground, on entrance he was greeted with the national anthem 'Vande Mataram' by the Ashram Band. The programme concluded with 'Jana-Gana-Mana'. My memories travelled spanning two decades. So many unexpected things happen in our life-time!

(To be continued)

ABANI SINHA

THE QUEST

WHEN I look inside my heart
 To see what's going on,
 When I look inside my mind
 To know what I dwell upon,
 When I search within myself
 There's nothing I can find,
 But when I search in my soul
 There's an ache of a certain kind:
 An ache that fills my heart,
 An ache that fills my soul,
 An ache that fills my being,
 And makes my mind condole.
 This ache is like a hunger,
 This ache is like a pain,
 This ache is something I can't place
 But from which I can't refrain.

It grows within me every day
 With every passing night,
 It comes and goes, and goes and comes
 But against it I can't fight.
 At times I want someone to help,
 Someone to understand,
 Someone to guide, someone to care
 And hold me by the hand.
 This someone seems to touch my life
 In a strange but subtle way,
 Just like the ache, this someone comes
 And goes and comes each day.
 But this someone overpowers my ache
 And gives me peace of mind.
 This someone is God, and God alone
 Who seems so hard to find.

MONAMIE GHATAK (17 years)

SRI AUROBINDO

A TALK AT THE OPEN CENTER IN NEW YORK

It is always a great pleasure to be here at the Open Center. Thank you for inviting me once again to speak on the subject most dear to me: Sri Aurobindo. But you know, the subject is too vast and I feel like a grain of sand trying to hold Infinity. To adapt the Kathopanishadic sloka, mind and speech return baffled and silent from any attempt to capture the magnitude and depth of his many-sided personality and work. Besides, his life was “not lived on the surface for men to see”.

In the words of the Mother, the spiritual collaborator in his work, “What Sri Aurobindo represents in the world’s history is not a teaching, not even a revelation; it is a decisive action direct from the Supreme.”

As we briefly review his life and work, we shall see how true this is from the very day of his birth. He was born at 5.00 a.m., that is about 24 minutes before the sunrise, known as Brahmamuhurta in India—the most auspicious hour, before the gods awake to herald the Dawn, the Dawn of New Creation.

The name chosen for him, Aurobindo, is equally significant. It means the red lotus, the sacred national flower of India. It symbolises the Avatar, the descent of the Supreme in a human body.

Providence had chosen him for the most powerful synthesis between the cultures of the East and the West. Dr. Krishnadhan, Sri Aurobindo’s father, was a civil surgeon with a degree from England. He desired his children to have a western education, too. As a young child, Sri Aurobindo was looked after by an English governess and hardly knew his own mother tongue.

At the tender age of five, he was sent away to the Loreto Convent School in Darjeeling, and then at seven he was taken along with his two brothers to England for academic studies. He was to learn to be detached and self-reliant.

He received a good grounding in Greek and Latin for which he earned many prizes. He also learned many European languages, and achieved mastery of their literature and history. A brilliant student, he secured a scholarship at King’s College, Cambridge, and passed the first part of the Classical Tripos with distinction. At the same time, he was registered as a candidate for the Indian Civil Service according to the wishes of his father, and had won a stipend for it, too. All this he was able to achieve in spite of the most trying financial conditions during which he did not have enough money for even food and winter clothing. This proves not only his courage, perseverance, industry and character, but his mastery over himself and a state of equality in all circumstances—a good foundation for Yoga.

During this time, Sri Aurobindo’s father used to send his sons some clippings from Indian newspapers, describing atrocities, inhuman treatment and

exploitation by the British government. On reading these reports, Sri Aurobindo had a feeling that he would play a role in the resurgence of India.

Obviously, he felt no calling for the Indian Civil Service under the British. So, though he passed all the other tests, he did not appear for the final riding test and thus was disqualified for the Service. Now, he looked forward to his return to India.

After getting an appointment in the service of the Maharaja of Baroda, he sailed for India in 1893. He was twenty-one. Mother India received her son warmly by granting him the boon of a major spiritual experience: an absolute calm descended upon him as soon as he touched her shore, and it remained with him for ever afterwards.

Besides his work with the Maharaja, who consulted him on various matters, he was a lecturer in French at Baroda College, of which later he became the Principal. During this time he mastered many Indian languages, including Sanskrit, so as to gain first-hand knowledge of Indian culture and its spiritual basis. He translated some plays from Sanskrit and wrote several plays in English.

He was married to a most beautiful wife, who was completely devoted to him. But he had no time for his personal life.

Sri Aurobindo's intense love for India, whom he worshipped as an aspect of the Divine Mother, called him to her service. He left a comfortable, well-paid job and accepted a life of austerity and constant risk to work for the freedom of India. As he said in one of his poems, *Invitation*: "Stark must he be and a kinsman to danger / Who shares my kingdom and walks at my side."

He edited two national journals and addressed meetings, giving an entirely new directive to the political movement, demanding independence without any compromise, as a birthright, instead of begging for it. The force and conviction of his fiery articles and speeches implanted in the minds of his countrymen an indomitable will for absolute freedom. This shook even the British empire and he was marked out as a most dangerous man.

The British Government implicated him in the famous Alipore Bomb Case—famous because of Sri Aurobindo—and arrested him. He was in jail under trial for one year. One is shocked to read about the inhuman conditions of the prison life, but Sri Aurobindo was concentrated on his spiritual search and had time to read the Gita. He had another major spiritual experience of the presence of Vasudeva—the Lord of the Universe—in everything, in every one, everywhere, guiding and directing all. He received the guidance to leave the political field since he was chosen for another work for India and the world. He was acquitted because the government could not find any evidence to prove his involvement.

Sri Aurobindo was an agnostic till he met a sannyasin, who cured his brother Barin of a severe fever by giving him a glass of water charged with the power of a

mantra. This convinced him of the power of spirituality which he wanted to use for freeing India. He then met a yogi called Lele, who taught him how to silence his mind, which he achieved in three days only, and began to receive the inner guidance. From then on, he was on his own.

All the major spiritual experiences came to him unsought. He had no guru or master other than the Divine within. He was an acknowledged national leader and continued to edit the journals and address mass meetings until he received a clear inner command to leave British India and go to Chandernagore and then to Pondicherry, both under French rule. He had no ambition nor any personal need for himself. He lived for God alone.

He arrived in Pondicherry on the 4th April, 1910. It is interesting to note that according to the archaeological research done by a French professor, Pondicherry was well-known in antiquity as Vedapuri, a seat of Vedic learning under the sage Agastya. No wonder it was from this very place that Sri Aurobindo gave us *The Secret of the Veda*, a book expounding the truth which had been lost.

Life in Pondicherry was not easy. A few disciples had followed him, and financially they were in dire need. Besides, they were constantly pursued by the British police though they had left the political field and had come there for a spiritual purpose.

He never wanted the Yoga or its power for himself. He had the experience of Nirvana, but he did not consider it to be the highest achievement, because for him life had a purpose and it was to manifest the Divine. He must explore therefore all the planes of consciousness. For, he could not be satisfied with anything short of the Divine Manifestation. As he said, "Man is God hiding himself from Nature," and "Earth is the cradle for the arriving God." This is a constant refrain of the magnificent song of his life. Here is an example from one of his many plays, *Perseus the Deliverer*:

Cassiopea.

How can the immortal gods and Nature change?

Perseus:

All alters in a world that is the same.

Man most must change who is a soul of Time;

His gods too change and live in larger light.

Cepheus:

Then man too may arise to greater heights,

His being draw nearer to the gods?

Perseus:

Perhaps.

But the blind nether forces still have power

And the ascent is slow and long is Time.

Yet shall Truth grow and harmony increase:
The day shall come when men feel close and one.

This was the difficulty: the nether forces of Inconscient Matter, the nescient substance of the physical body in which the Divine Inhabitant dwelt.

He considered his own yoga as an indispensable means for the realisation of God in man. For, he knew the problems of human life on earth, a life of ignorance with its roots still in Inconscient Matter, a life besieged by turbulent vital desires, passions and ambitions, and a mind, however rational, enlightened and spiritualised, still imperfect and limited in its power to offer any lasting solution. He had come to lift man out of his struggle with ignorance, falsehood, pain and suffering, not by an escape into some otherworldly heaven or an entry into Nirvana. He had come to hew a perfect path to help man to transcend himself and his egocentric consciousness so that he may become what he secretly is: God. But he knew this can only be done by the effective and transforming power of the Supramental Truth-Consciousness.

He said in one of his letters: "I am seeking to bring some principle of inner Truth, Light, Harmony, Peace and Bliss into the earth-consciousness. I see it ever gleaming down on my consciousness. I believe the descent of this Truth, opening the way to a development of the Divine Consciousness here, to be the final sense of the earth evolution."

We, in India, believe that for each new momentous step of the evolution of Consciousness, the Divine descends in a human body upon earth to open a way for humanity to ascend to a higher plane of consciousness. Our mythology speaks of a series of Avatars, helping the evolution of Nature from Matter to Man and the possibility of a further evolution when the Truth shall be established in its integrality on earth.

The definition of the Avatar as given by Sri Aurobindo fits him perfectly, though he never claimed himself to be an Avatar. He says: "The Avatar is always a dual phenomenon of divinity and humanity; the Divine takes upon himself the human nature with all its outer limitations and makes them the circumstances, the means and instruments of the Divine Consciousness and Divine Power—a vessel of the Divine Birth and the Divine Works."

For us, Sri Aurobindo is an emanation of the Supreme who came upon earth to assure us of the inevitable descent of the Supramental Consciousness to create a new race, a gnostic race, and a new world of Truth-Consciousness, a supramental world where ignorance, falsehood, error and suffering have no place.

On the other side of the globe, another being had been prepared to share in his work. She came from France with her husband Paul Richard, who had met Sri Aurobindo earlier and declared him the greatest among the great divine men of Asia. She, Mirra, whom we came to know and adore as the Mother, carried in her inmost depths the ideal of progressive universal harmony. She hoped to

realise the kingdom of God on earth by awakening in all the inner divinity which is One, and working for its manifestation.

On meeting Sri Aurobindo on 29th March, 1914, she recognised him at once as the being who had guided her in her dreams and visions. She felt in his presence a great peace enveloping and descending to penetrate her very soul. The next day, she wrote in her diary: "It matters little that there are thousands of beings plunged in the densest ignorance, He whom we saw yesterday is on earth; His presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light, and Thy reign shall be indeed established upon earth."

Sri Aurobindo said about her later: "It was the first time I knew that perfect surrender to the last physical cell was humanly possible." This surrender to the Divine is one of the most essential conditions of the Integral Yoga.

It was a silent but momentous meeting between the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, while Paul Richard and he conversed on serious subjects. What took place on the inner plane between the Mother and Sri Aurobindo was significantly revealed by the Mother later (in the third person): "In silence, they exchanged the depths of their souls and thoughts; in silence, they spoke of the greatness of the work to be done and the splendour of the victory to come of which the dazzling radiance about him seemed a glorious pledge."

The practical outcome of their meeting in its early stage was, for our priceless benefit, the launching of the philosophical journal *Arya*, the first issue of which came out on the 15th August, a birthday of Sri Aurobindo. And though the Mother and Paul Richard left after six months for France due to the First World War, fortunately for us Sri Aurobindo continued writing, every month, about sixty pages of *Arya*, on diverse subjects without interruption for six years. Thus all his major works, except the epic *Savitri*, were published serially. It is interesting to note that Sri Aurobindo wrote six or seven books on different subjects simultaneously and he worked on them all in the last week of every month before publication.

This is to say that he did not live like an ordinary man. He was indifferent to food and sleep and comfort and equal in all circumstances. He did not think like an ordinary man. He had achieved a complete silence of the mind and stillness of the being for the highest light to pass through without any distortion. He saw with the inner eye of Truth penetrating everything. Not only the truth of things, events and people was revealed to him, but the truth of the occult worlds and their actions too. Speech and action emanated from him with the clarity of the vision of the whole. He said once that he could write the entire *Arya* every month for 70 years and yet the knowledge that came to him from above would hardly be exhausted.

He clearly states his goal in *The Life Divine*: "To know, possess and be the divine being in an animal and egoistic consciousness, to convert our twilight or obscure physical mentality into the plenary supramental illumination, to build

peace and self-existent bliss where there is only a stress of transitory satisfactions besieged by physical pain and emotional suffering, to establish an infinite freedom in a world which presents itself as a group of mechanical necessities, to discover and realise the immortal life in a body subjected to death and constant mutation,—this is offered to us as the manifestation of God in Matter and the goal of Nature in her terrestrial evolution.”

The Mother finally returned to Pondicherry on 24th April, 1920. India, she said, was her true country, the country of her soul, and her work was to give a concrete form to Sri Aurobindo’s vision of the divine manifestation upon earth.

In one of his letters, in April 1920, he wrote: “The inner Guide, the Universal Teacher showed me my path entirely.... Without reaching the Supramental, it is impossible to know the ultimate secret of the world.... But its attainment is not easy. After fifteen years I am just now rising to the lowest of the three layers of the Supermind and trying to draw up all my movements into it.”

Sri Aurobindo was intensely occupied with his spiritual work and often spoke of the possibility of the descent of the higher consciousness and its process. People around him felt the power of his consciousness in curing numerous diseases and solving the problems of those who sought his help and in influencing world events. He spent considerable time reading letters of disciples and helping them, often working till the early hours of the morning. He had an excellent sense of humour, packed with wisdom. One has only to read his correspondence with Nirodbaran, some of his poems and particularly his *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, for example:

1. The mediaeval ascetics hated women and thought that they were created by God for the temptation of monks. One may be allowed to think more nobly both of God and woman.
2. Imitation is sometimes a good training-ship; but it will never fly the flag of the admiral.
3. A God who cannot smile could not have created this humorous universe.

All this in spite of his engagement in breaking the tremendous resistance of Inconscient Matter—a formidable task of opening up not only the most recalcitrant physical consciousness but the very cells of his body to the light of the Truth-Consciousness.

24th November 1926 marked the day of victory when the force of Krishna’s Overmind Consciousness descended into the physical. Krishna is the god of Bliss, supporting the evolution of Nature and leading it to the absolute self-existent Bliss. The descent of this force was essential for preparing the descent of the Supramental Consciousness. Many felt a flood of light rushing down from

above The atmosphere was charged with electric energy. In silence the disciples received the blessings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Now, the descent of this Overmind Consciousness brought with it most spectacular events. One day, the Mother received what is known as the Word of Creation, with its inherent power of realisation. A brilliant creation was worked out in extraordinary details with marvellous experiences and contacts with the divine beings. When she spoke about it to Sri Aurobindo, he was silent for a while. Then, he said, "Yes, this is Overmind creation. It is very interesting and very well done. You will perform miracles which will make you famous throughout the world." Then, he smiled and said: "It will be a great success. But it is an Overmind creation. It is not success that we want. We want transformation. We want to establish the Supermind on earth. One must know how to renounce the immediate success in order to create the New World, the Supramental World, in its integrality."

The Mother went back to her room, concentrated intensely and in a few hours she completely dissolved the creation that was on the verge of manifesting.

This is Sri Aurobindo, a pure, immaculate, transparent, one-pointed instrument of the Divine. He never compromised. To know what the Overmind Consciousness is one has to read *The Life Divine*, where he gives a detailed description of the intervening planes of Consciousness between Mind and Supermind.

For a divine life on earth, an integral transformation of all the parts of our being, including the nescient substance of our physical being, which is moulded out of Inconscient Matter, is a prerequisite so that the impurities and obscurities of the lower nature do not invade or swallow up the light of the Truth-Consciousness when it descends from above.

Sri Aurobindo asserts that even the highest plane of the Overmind cannot wholly transform the Inconscient. Sri Aurobindo therefore needed to bring the light and force of the Supramental Truth-Consciousness into the very cells of his physical body and into the earth-consciousness. He withdrew from all external contacts in order to fully concentrate on this work and gave the complete charge of the Ashram to the Mother.

He was absolutely certain that the evolution of Nature which marched from Matter to Life and then to the rudimentary mind in the animal, reaching to the present degree of mental consciousness, could not cease at so imperfect a creation as Man. It must continue its ascending series of evolution till the supreme Truth-Consciousness with its omniscient knowledge, unerring will, invincible power and invariable self-existent Bliss is manifest. And this, he knew, could only be done by the descent of the effective and transforming power of the Supramental Consciousness. He saw it as a thing decreed and inevitable in the course of the terrestrial evolution of Nature.

It was indeed a veritable labour of God, but he had received a command:

I have been digging deep and long
 Mid a horror of filth and mire
 A bed for the golden river's song,
 A home for the deathless fire....

A voice cried, "Go where none have gone!
 Dig deeper, deeper yet
 Till thou reach the grim foundation stone
 And knock at the keyless gate."

It was a severe and painful work to penetrate the hard rock of the Inconscient where none had gone. But he was aiming at the irresistible victory of God by building a rainbow bridge between the Earth's gulfs and Heaven's heights.

The Ashram grew spontaneously around the Mother with a different aim than ordinarily conceived, its aim being a total transformation of the being and nature. The pressure of her presence for organisation, order, cleanliness, beauty, harmony and perfection by being conscious of one's feelings, thoughts and actions was very strong, because nothing escaped her attention. But her understanding of human nature was deep, and she was kind, compassionate and patient, her love so boundless that the whole world could take refuge in her.

In 1938, Sri Aurobindo saw the asuric power at work behind Hitler and foresaw the consequent crisis for human civilisation. War was not desirable at that time. He was engaged in pushing back the downward rush of the hostile forces, to delay the war. He saved the world but had to pay the price and bear the blow himself. He tripped and fell, fracturing his right thigh-bone. He remained lying quietly without a cry for help or even a word. The Mother must have received the vibration in her sleep and came to his room. She called for the doctor and the injured leg was put in a cast. Sri Aurobindo was shifted to his bed and a team of attendants was fixed by the Mother. It was the opportunity for the attendants to draw him into conversation to have his insight on current topics of interest

During the Second World War, he followed the news closely. He had a unique political insight and favoured India's participation with the Allies. People did not understand how Sri Aurobindo, who had fought against the British rule, could now support the Allies. Sri Aurobindo explained his position by declaring: "It is a struggle for an ideal that has to establish itself in the life of humanity against the darkness and falsehood that are trying to overwhelm the earth. It is the forces at work behind the battle that have to be seen. I support the British for India's own interest and for humanity."

When Hitler was rushing like a mad bull all over Europe, people did not think that the world had any chance. Sri Aurobindo simply said: "Hitler is not

immortal.” He had put all his spiritual force behind the Allies and had no doubt about the issue of the war.

In his poem on Hitler, Sri Aurobindo wrote:

Thus driven he must stride on conquering all,
Threatening and clamouring, brutal, invincible,
Until he meets upon his storm-swept road
A greater devil—or thunderstroke of God.

England and France were not yet ready. The Spitfire was not yet built on a large scale; America was pursuing a policy of non-involvement; Russia was ready to join with Germany.

Sri Aurobindo said: “The next conflict will be between Germany and Russia.” This did happen in spite of the expectations to the contrary. Then non-involved America too decided to join the Allies in defence of civilisation and its highest attained values.

Sri Aurobindo had not yet given attention to Japan. But when Calcutta was bombed and the Japanese were gleefully advancing into Assam, Sri Aurobindo intervened. The Japanese warships exploded and sank. They had to take a sound beating from an unexpected heavy downpour inundating the dense jungles of Assam. The jubilantly marching Japanese army was bogged down by the flood and mud, compelled to retreat.

For us, it was Sri Aurobindo’s war, turning the wheel of destiny for the future of humanity.

During the war, many of the disciples of Sri Aurobindo brought their families to the Ashram, considering it to be a safe shelter. But the children could not be expected to do the Yoga. Some arrangement had to be made for their education. This was the beginning of what came to be known later as the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.

During the war, Sri Aurobindo’s revised edition of *The Life Divine* was published, after which his work on *Savitri* began. He took great pains to raise *Savitri* to his ideal of perfect perfection, revising it again and again in the light of his spiritual experiences and the inspiration he received from above. The work suffered at times because of the heavy correspondence with the disciples. The *Book of Death* and the *Epilogue* were not revised. *Savitri* is an expression of something seen, felt or experienced by Sri Aurobindo. It is mystic poetry but not abstract. A new kind of poetry demands a new mentality in the reader.

It is magnificent poetry, elevating us to a realm of sheer beauty and delight. The story of *Savitri* is taken from a legend in the Mahabharata. But Sri Aurobindo has turned this legend into a powerful symbol of his own spiritual experiences, thus giving it the most profound significance. It consists of twelve Books and spans over 23,000 lines.

Savitri, the heroine of the epic, is an emanation of the Divine Mother who has come upon earth in answer to the call of humanity to save it from Ignorance, Falsehood and Death and lead it towards the light of Truth and immortal Bliss.

The epic is a spiritual adventure in which Sri Aurobindo guides us through the different characters in our upward journey, revealing mysteries after mysteries of the different worlds and their planes of Consciousness from Inconscient Matter to Superconscient heights. He gives us a comprehensive understanding of the forces active in the individual, universal and transcendent levels of existence. He lays bare the Divine Plan in all its details and the Purpose of Existence, with an incisive insight into the psychology of Man and the interaction of subtle forces. At the same time, he gives us guidelines to meet the challenge of these forces active in the world.

Savitri is such a perfect guide on the sunlit path of the Integral Yoga that we feel no fear of faltering, nor hesitation. We are able to walk securely, with certainty and featherlike feet, our heart singing a song of life, our mind fully awakened to the beauty and splendour of existence and our whole being dancing its way in ecstasy towards the goal of the divine manifestation.

World upon world is revealed by the poet. In the language of the Rig Veda, "As a seer working out the occult truths and their discoveries of knowledge, he brought into being the seven craftsmen of heaven and in the light of the Day, they spoke and wrought the things of their Wisdom."

The last writings of Sri Aurobindo appeared under the title *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*, where he spoke of a race of beings possessing a Mind of Light, capable of living in the Truth.

As in life, so in death, every action of the gnostic being is self-determined. Reading the account of the passing of Sri Aurobindo, we come to know that a grim battle was fought in the physical sphere for a set purpose. The purpose was to bring the Supramental Light down to the physical body in order to transform and divinise Matter. This had to be done to build a bridge between the abyss and the heights for the Supramental Manifestation.

K. D. Sethna, one of the close disciples of Sri Aurobindo, also known as Amal Kiran, the name given by Sri Aurobindo, and meaning "A Clear Ray", reports about Sri Aurobindo: "In the course of this plunge, as layer after layer of the occult Inconscient is torn open and the Supramental light sought to be called down into it, various dreadful possibilities rise up, and great inner wounds as well as severe bodily tensions have to be endured. Immense are his trials in spite of the sublimest light within his body."

According to the medical reports, Sri Aurobindo was in a state of deep uraemic coma, a state which does not admit any return to consciousness. But Sri Aurobindo opened his eyes at frequent intervals and asked for a drink of water or enquired what the time was. It was a conscious yogic self-withdrawal.

Death was not a mystery to him. He had plumbed the abyss and scaled the

heights. He was the author of his own cosmic drama. He could have cured himself by his own spiritual force, but he refused to. When a disciple asked him why he was not using it, he simply said: "Can't explain; you won't understand."

On 4th December, he expressed a wish to sit up. He sat in his chair normally. After an hour he came back to his bed and the symptoms returned. He had said once: "the Divinity acts according to the consciousness above and the Lila, that is, the play below according to the need of the Lila." This may explain why he did not use his spiritual force to cure himself.

In another letter he had said: "Why should the Divine be tied down to succeed in all his operations? What if failure suits him better and serves better the ultimate purpose?" This may offer another clue as to why he left his body.

He was conscious till the last moment. Half an hour before leaving his body he drank some water and bestowed on all around the last glance of recognition and compassion and left his body at 1.25 a.m. on 5th December 1950.

Sri Aurobindo's body was suffused with the golden light of the Supramental Consciousness. The Mother announced: "Sri Aurobindo's body is charged with such a concentration of Supramental Light that there is no sign of decomposition." It was on 9th December that his body was put in a silver-lined rosewood casket and interred at 5.00 p.m. in the centre of the Ashram main building.

He had clearly said that he needed nothing for himself. He had come to hew the path for the Supramental realisation and to pay God's debt to earth and men. Only the Divine can bear the burden he had to bear and all who come to help humanity have to bear. He fought with the dark powers of the Inconscient and had no hesitation in giving up his body as a supreme sacrifice to win the Divine's victory. And this victory was achieved on a universal scale on the 29th February, 1956, when the Supramental Light and Force and Consciousness rushed down upon earth in an uninterrupted flow.

People who are inwardly ready, who are in contact with higher forces and are open to them, can see and feel the action of this Consciousness in the earth atmosphere and world events. Everywhere we mark the pressure of this Force towards change and reconstitution. All our fixed laws of living, whether social, political, ethical, religious, or any other, seem to be collapsing, because life is too complex to be governed by any fixed law. One is compelled to discover the inner laws of Truth and to learn to live with a vision of a complex unity where diversities complement rather than conflict.

There are people everywhere who have accepted to face heroically the furnace of inner purification and transformation of the being. In 1968, the Mother invited all men of goodwill and sincerity to build the international township of Auroville for the realisation of a progressive universal harmony.

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo were equal in consciousness and complementary to each other. She too, was for us an emanation of the Divine Mother in her aspects of Wisdom, Power, Love, Beauty and Harmony, leading us all to the

perfection of the Divine Manifestation on earth.

She had assured the disciples that Sri Aurobindo had not left the earth atmosphere. He is still there in the subtle physical, conscious and alive, ready to help. So is the Mother, who left her body twenty-three years later, in 1973.

Perhaps, we could sum up the message of their life and work through these lines of *Savitri*:

There are greater destinies mind cannot surmise,
Fixed on the summit of the evolving Path
The Traveller now treads in the Ignorance,
Unaware of his next step, not knowing his goal.
Mind is not all his tireless climb can reach,
There is a fire on the apex of the worlds,
There is a house of the Eternal's Light.
There is an infinite truth, an absolute power.

A Light there is that leads, a Power that aids...

Out of the Immortal's substance you are made;
Your actions can be swift revealing steps,
Your life a changeful mould for growing gods.
A Seer, a strong Creator, is within,
The immaculate Grandeur broods upon your days,
Almighty powers are shut in Nature's cells.
A greater destiny waits you in your front:
This transient earthly being if he wills
Can fit his acts to a transcendent scheme.
He who now stares at the world with ignorant eyes
Hardly from the Inconscient's night aroused,
That look at images and not at Truth
Can fill those orbs with an immortal's sight.

Authors of earth's high change, to you it is given
To cross the dangerous spaces of the soul
And touch the mighty Mother stark awake
And meet the Omnipotent in this house of flesh
And make of life the million-bodied One.

KAILAS JHAVERI

CHRISTALIS

by

GEORGETTE COTY

(Continued from the issue of February 1996)

Lesser Archive

HE came without an earlier intimation and roused me from a rather deep sleep. The suddenness of it made me a little unsteady, but I managed to greet him with a smile.

“I give you some force, Halio,” he said, “now take my hand and off we go ”

‘He is taking me to some important place,’ I said to myself full of joy, and was looking forward to the adventure.

“We will stop down there for a minute or two, till you are ready for the ‘adventure’ as you call it.”

Presently we alighted and moved by some force we came to a charming garden stretching before a stately mansion. The front door was open, I could see some of its interior. Just as I was to take a better look at it, my attention was arrested by a child of no ordinary looks, coming out to the patio pulling the hand of an exquisite young woman.

I heard the child addressing her and also her reply to him. The intonation of their words sounded as so many ripples of gently-toned rhymes.

Standing a little afar, I listened enchanted, hoping to understand their speech. ‘Christalis will teach it to me,’ I said to myself.

This scene was unparalleled by any of my previous spheres of experiences and I would have gladly observed it longer, but all at once the charming scene and those two in it disappeared.

I felt Christalis touching me—

“We go on, Halio. There is more for you to learn today. You are sufficiently refreshed now, I think.”

Obediently I let him lead me on in this ethereal terrain where scenes and persons appeared and disappeared.

“Come, sit here beside me, don’t look so startled, tell me what you see.”

I noticed that there was no growth of any vegetation here, not a blade of grass, nor any trees or flowers to grace the place. ‘Curious,’ I thought, ‘we haven’t been here before ’

“No, we haven’t, Halio. True, I promised to take you to an important Archive of Records, but in order to further your store of knowledge I thought it advisable to show you another Archive before. Part of your earlier experiences

are still lodged in your cells, and I want them to be cleared.”

He touched my heart and my forehead and took me by the hand. I felt that his grip was firmer than before.

‘How sweet is my Christalis,’ I thought, ‘he tends to my every need. I love him so.’

“I am glad you do, now be still and we move on ”

I found ourselves standing before an extremely large building. I marvelled at its immensity. How did we get here, I never ventured to ask, this too must be the way of things in this place.

As we moved closer to it, I noticed that the entire structure was made of shining marble—all black-and-white, inlaid in equal proportions with mystifying geometrical designs. So were the walls of the entrance, the floor and the pillars facing one another: black on one side, white on the other.

‘An odd colonnade is this, not such a joyful place,’ I felt.

Christalis motioned to me to look up and read the inscription above the entrance. I did as he indicated and read:

ARCHIVES OF WARS AND THEIR EFFECTS

A slight shudder coursed through me. I did not know what to make of this and would have preferred to stay on the outside. My legs were shaking, I was hesitant to approach further. I looked at Christalis.

“Must we go in there? Could we not go back to that mother and child? I would so love to listen to their rhyme-speech again. Maybe I could teach it to the children They learn fast—truly they do.”

“Do not fear,” he said. “This is for your learning.”

He pressed my hand reassuringly and we entered this Hall of unimaginable magnitude Vast and high as it was, its entire interior was covered with symmetrically fitted compartments, all of them filled with scripts.

‘This is like a beehive,’ I thought, ‘not honey-combed with honey but with books and files.’ It made me dizzy just looking at them. Now I noticed that there were people there continually climbing up and down on some steep ladders, attending them. They were not climbing really, but rather they were ascending and descending to and fro on them

Christalis waved his hand and a marble table appeared before me of the same patterns and colours which dominated everything here.

A book rested on it entitled “EVENT NUMBER 000”. ‘A code number,’ I thought.

“You are right, but to decode it is not our concern now.”

“Must I read this? Couldn’t we go elsewhere please?”

“Open it, Halio, and read what is written there,” he said, taking no notice of my plea.

“Turn the page,” he commanded, “learn what it says.”

As if by its own will, the first page opened up before me. Leaf after leaf

turned, nor did I have to read them, the words announced themselves and as they did, I saw the events they recounted in vivid imagery, as in a cinema.

I saw that from the beginning of the time of man's existence savage battles of carnage took their toll of nature and the people that suffered them. The pages turned one after the other, bringing to view races and nations making their appearance onto the scene and into oblivion.

The audio-visuality came to a stop. The book was still open in front of me. Staring at it, I waited unmoving 'Will there be more to read?' I wondered.

"Yes, there is some more you can learn today," I heard Christalis saying. "Wait."

Presently the pages began to roll rapidly without revealing their contents, then came to a halt. There were no more pictures, the screen, the book, the entire Hall was suffused with light. The voice spoke again—

"The records remain in the Archives for future generations to consult and to learn from them, till the Higher Light transforms their effects."

With a wave of Christalis's hand, both table and book were gone. Here was only silence now, but I saw two hands lifting the book and handing it to someone who carried it away up one of those steep ladders that made me so dizzy, and placed it into an empty compartment.

I had no speech; overwhelmed, unmoving, I allowed Christalis to lead me out from there without resistance, and I never looked back.

"Shall we rest awhile, Halio, till you regain your composure?" I nodded to indicate that I'd like that very much.

"It is good for you to be silent; remain this way, the shadows of the past give way to the descending God-Light; we look to its coming closer each day."

"I will not come for a few days to give you time to absorb the experience and know that the road is clear to lead you to further learning."

I awoke feeling happy and light as if a great burden had lifted from me. 'The God-Light will come down to earth,' he had said—'oh Christalis, my very own light-bringer, how can I show my gratitude for all you teach me .. may my heart reflect some of it to my children.'

"It does that already," I heard Christalis' voice inside me. "Live in the Light."

Time and Design

This was the day appointed for our meeting after a lapse of some days, and I looked forward to it with no small expectation. Christalis was unable to come earlier, but I was never left wondering about this. His messages had always come well before I could begin to worry about it.

Ready as always, my heart's gate opened for him, I lay back resting,

waiting.... Not for all that long, for I soon heard his voice and saw his glorious light before me.

“I hope that you were not too disappointed about my delay. I came as soon as I was able.”

Here he was, reaching for my hand to touch, and I, so happy to see him again, that I would have gladly given him my heart as well, had he asked for it.

“You must do no such thing,” he chided me with a smile that would have made a stone sing—“If you gave me your heart, where would my Flower Halio live?”

“Do not mind my silly thoughts, Christalis, I am mad with joy today, and you know who is the cause of it.”

“Are you ready then?” He was not smiling now—“Today, I make good my promise. Open yourself, be very conscious and observe everything well. Only as much as you can perceive today will remain in your memory, no more.”

We stopped nowhere, but travelled like an arrow sent on its way. In the distance a golden light became visible. It grew brighter as we neared it, as if walking into the sun, so blinding was it to my eyes. As we proceeded toward it, I saw something shimmering in its midst. I heard my own heart chanting: “Oh, the Golden City, the Golden City of Light.”

I did not feel that I was breathing at all, which was rather strange, as I felt no discomfort. Christalis pressed my hand hard and the force from it gave me better sight. Now I could see the source of that blinding light—a Golden Palace—or was it a Temple?—was glowing brightly at some distance from us.

“We will enter first the great Mother’s Temple before going further. No, not the one you have already visited,” he was reading my thought—“that was on another plane. Be steady.”

Everything seemed golden. The Temple before us shone with even greater radiance than the one of pure white that we had seen before. It was dazzling, powerful; I struggled to keep my eyes open, blinking hard.

“Enter, Christalis? I thought I was not allowed to do that, we only worshipped in front of it before.”

“Not this time, Halio. The Mother’s Heart of Love is calling you now! Come with me.”

“Where to? I cannot see, Christalis, I am blind!” I cried. I felt a silken touch over my heart, over my eyes—and when I opened them I was standing before the golden statue of a Goddess, of unsurpassable beauty, seated on a golden throne made of light.

The statue smiled, rays of golden radiance emanated from Her smile. They covered the whole world. One ray entered me. I staggered on my feet and felt my entire body filled with bliss . . . with love . . . Her love!...

“She is not a statue,” my heart said to me—“She is the living Mother of the universe, worship Her! She reigns over the worlds and lives in every being’s

heart... omnipresent, omnipotent, She is all.”

I lifted my head, trying to look into Her face, to offer all of myself to Her, but now a veil covered it. But in my outstretched hands I saw my own ruby heart held, throbbing, living only for Her.

I remembered no more. Not how or when we came out of the Temple, nor any other thing in the world, except the smile of Her beatific lips. When I emerged from this sublime experience, I met Christalis's eyes watching me.

“I know how you feel. A rare grace has been granted to you, Halio. Many high-souled ones pray to behold Her face for one single second. They ask for no more. You received this grace today, a prelude to more wondrous things to come. But how do you feel now, are you able to go further with me?” he asked. “Do you want to rest?”

“She can go on!” came the voice from the Temple, “I have given her sufficient force for that.”

We looked at one another, bowed down in salutation and went on our way, but I felt a miracle growing inside me. I was no longer a separate entity but a part of Her—She living inside me—and I living in Her. I knew that something had changed in me, I entered into another reality.

“We have arrived,” Christalis said very softly, “at the Archives of God, where records of all events are kept, concerning the development of earth and humanity.”

“Is this where the souls' records are kept?” I asked in inner speech.

“No, my dear, I cannot take you there, that is not our work, I have told you this. What you will see is for high learning.”

The road we walked on was golden, and the Hall itself shone like blue sapphire, the gate studded with pearls. This time I was calm, nothing disturbed my inner bliss, no exclamation... Nothing but silence...

At the entry stood a guard. A godlike person—tall, beautiful, his body pale blue, his eyes aglow.

“By whose permission do you seek entrance?” he asked, towering before us. Christalis held up a paper, which had the seal of the Great Mother on it, the living words: “By my wish.”

The gateman bowed to it deeply, then turning to us—“The way is open. Enter, Christalis, with earth's Halion.”

An immense Hall opened before us, leading to several others, from what I could observe at first glance. Here every small detail displayed great beauty of craftsmanship. Gold and silver carvings decorated the walls, depicting scenes of heaven, scenes of earth—all alive.

“Halion, this is the antechamber of the records. Observe what you see and retain what you can.”

Going deep inside myself in concentration, I remained motionless for some time, and called.... “O Divine Light, give me your power that I may be able to receive what is given me on this day.”

A ray of light entered me. My eyes saw clearly now what was before me. Rows upon rows, tablets—each made of a different precious stone—filled the halls. They were not fixed onto anything, but held in their places by a force. Each tablet was alive and they spoke in different tongues and, whenever I looked to observe any one of them, the scenes they depicted came alive, acting out the event.

Panorama of participants, rivers, mountains, valleys and plains.. cities vibrant with living force. People clad in garments of their period, moved about in cinematic fashion and I understood their tongues.

Here were scenes of great battles. Reigns of kings and priests, heroes and demigods. Chieftains of armies—all manner of contrivances, arms, modes of travel for domestic use and for industries.

We moved through countless halls, containing the living records of ages gone by... the fashion of their lives, their activities, achievements and the end of their times... the beginning of others. Here was stored the history of man. The lesser and the greater cycles that had passed and, in being observed, the meaning of each of these periods and the lessons learnt from them became living knowledge in me.

Christalis indicated in silent sign that we must move on from here. He looked at me searchingly, his eyes deep as the ocean as he looked at me, then lit up with a light which entered me and merged with mine. Taking a firmer grip of my hand, he led me on .. We moved toward a courtyard of immense pure white columns, leading to a reddish-gold perfectly circular dome, more like a globe. The light shining from it covered a great distance round it with circumfluent luminosity. No sign of an opening was there. This great circularity was perfectly sealed. A sheen for surface, entirely faultless, a thought would slide off it. As if appearing from nowhere—at least undetectable from the light till now—a guard stood before us menacingly.

“How came you here?” he roared. “Why is the earth-being by your side?”

Christalis once again drew from the folds of his garment the insignia of the Great Mother of Love, which, darting forth Her Light, spoke: “By my leave and wish they come. Let them enter, O faithful guardian, into the Hall of Truth.”

Tall as he was, his head nearly reaching the sky, he bowed before the sign. Like the arch of a rainbow, he touched the ground before it. When he rose, he greeted us by name and, holding out one long arm, pointed in the direction of the construction. It slid open, just enough for us to pass through it, then closed again.

“We are approaching the Hall of Designs—Motion—and Time,” Christalis spoke in a silent voice. “Be perceptive, concentrated...” We moved on.

An immense timepiece of gold dominated the first Hall, nothing else was there .. Suspended in its fixed place, its diamond dials moved in perpetual motion. Nothing could hold back or alter one single second of its timing, I knew. This was the Timepiece of God. No other power could alter the precision of

those indicators, other than what was in the Mind of God.

The clock ticked away, its sonority reverberated throughout the Hall, marking incessantly the motion of His unalterable Will. The rest was silence... total, immutable.

We moved on through spaces of silence, where a thought would have been a violence to sanctity... where silence was sovereign ruler over thought and speech, yet it embodied all knowledge no earth-mind could reach.

Onward we went, but a force halted our advance, we could not take a further step. A voice echoed through the Hall announcing:

“YOU ARE BEFORE THE SUPREME WILL.
IN HIS LIGHT PROCEED.”

Free to move, we went ahead. A living script—first of a sequence observable behind it—its light brilliant—ruling above everything else here unalterably, each syllable in radiant gold read:

THE WILL OF THE SUPREME LIGHT

. . . before it the planet Earth rotated in its sphere without a pause...

We bowed in salutation once again and moved toward the interior, I with trembling heart to observe the written Design.

One by one, a sequence of scripts grew visible as we came before them, each vibrant, alive.

We moved on, halting before each, and read:

THE HOUR OF THE MIRRORED LIGHT
THE UNVEILING HOUR
THE HOUR OF TRIALS
DANCE OF THE ELEMENTS AND GRAINS
DANCING NATIONS
POWER AND MONEY PIRQUETTE
THE HOUR OF THE BATTLE
THE HOUR OF THE HERO
THE SLAYING OF THE DRAGON
THE HOUR OF TRUTH AND VICTORY
THE LIGHT DESCENDS TO WED THE EARTH
THE BRIGHT-BODIED MOTHER UNVEILS HER FACE.

Enveloped in silence, unmoving we stood before these sacred scripts, not able to stir until the time allotted for our presence expired.

Pushed out by a force, we were outside the Golden Globe, which stood as we had found it—perfect in its circular form—without an opening, sealed.

Wordlessly Christalis took my hand. We bowed before it, then he led me back. Down through the many terrains that we had passed—slower than before... time given to readjustment to the atmosphere, to consciousness and to balance.

Below us spread the vast world. My little town lay sleeping under the star-studded canopy waiting for the first rays of the sun to kiss it awake.

For a single moment I saw the Earth-Mother rising toward us smiling radiantly, then disappearing into Her domain.... She knew what we had seen.... She had it written in Her heart.

I leaned down to kiss the ground to tell Her: “Sweet Mother, I am yours! In my bosom I bring with me Heaven’s Mother’s smile.”

“Yes, you do,”... I heard Her voice inside me, “Know this, O child, She and I, in two stations, are one.”

Christalis whispered,—“Rest for some time, the day is still young...”

I gladly did as he advised and dreamily allowed myself to ease onto my pillow with a sigh of joy. Fragments of words I had heard somewhere before came drifting into my mind:

...“The light grew brighter in the East... as She sang... as She sang melodies wonderful...”

(To be continued)

IS WORLD UNITY EVER GOING TO BE A REALITY?

SRI AUROBINDO has said that world unity is inevitable. I am attempting to examine how his prediction is coming true. But it is unfolding itself in a myriad forms and ways and therefore confusing the human mind. Hence the question that gets repeatedly asked is, "Are we getting closer or further from that unity?"

Let us examine some facts. The political pundits had forecast that the divided Germany would walk into the 21st century. A fortnight after their profound and considered opinion was published in *Time* magazine, the Berlin Wall fell. The communists believed that their doctrine would lead the world in the 21st century. The dismantling of the Soviet Union brought the end of the cold war and enhanced the chances of world unity. Communism today does not exist anywhere in the world (except Cuba and West Bengal, where it is floundering before the final withering away). At one time, the concept of "the united states of Europe" (a phrase coined by Sri Aurobindo and not Churchill) was such a joke that both the British and the French got choked on their favourite dishes. Today, a passport and no visa enables a European to travel around Europe without hindrance and soon there will also be a common currency and one pricing policy throughout Europe. That is the extent of unity among 16 nations. Culturally, language and history divide the European nations more than any other group of nations anywhere in the world. The deep wounds of two wars have not yet quite healed. And now economic interests have reached new heights of conflict. It is difficult to visualize how the Germans, the French and the British are going to accept the new emerging realities of the certainty of unity.

The 20th century failed to bring about unity through the political process. The political process of unity was based on inequality and therefore bred suspicion among nations. The effort of unity at the tail-end of the 20th century has been founded on the emerging economic realities. The affluent nations prospered and progressed from within and made their peoples rich and prosperous. There was no need for them to look outwards. The sudden event of deep recession that overtook the rich nations made them pause and look outward for help and indeed for survival. The United States, Japan and the European markets had reached saturation points of consumption. It was no more possible for them to remain to themselves. They had to explore new markets. That drive began to unite the world in a strange manner. People began to seek the common bonds and traits across the world that could bring them together and ignore those characteristics that created the rift. For instance, instead of looking at the Chinese or Indian character's weaknesses, they began to discover its strengths. Hence communication between different nations became easier. And the need to communicate with each other across the world has created newer and revolutionary technologies which are absolutely mind-boggling. You can now

speak to any part of the world from an airplane and speak to each other across nations on a PC. I can now sit before my little PC notebook at home and call for any information I need on any subject through the Internet-web-connection from any part of the world. Technology is playing a prominent role in bringing about unity among nations.

However, the experience of the West through the traumatic recession years has made it lose confidence in solutions that come out of economic expediencies. A more permanent solution to the mental and physical well-being is now being sought. This movement had begun in the early 60s, but died out because of the sudden onslaught of immense prosperity among the western nations. Temporarily, the going was good. The final blow came in the mid-eighties. It was a strange sight to see beggars on the streets of New York and London. Crime came in a big way—drug trafficking and illegal underground transactions to fight the sudden onset of poverty among the rich nations.

Now, it is the meditation time around the world. Every city in the world has a few spiritual and yoga centres. Hundreds of people go there for meditation and purification. Many people have taken up a simpler and cleaner way of living. Material prosperity is no more the final seeking for many people. I was amazed to see meditation centres in Japan, throughout Europe and the USA. A leading publisher in the United States told me that more books on religion and spirituality are published now than ever before in history. There are more television channels dedicated to religion.

Hence I am beginning to observe how world unity is manifesting itself in different ways. The political drive for unity has failed. The current economic drive towards unity has undeniably made some progress but most people believe that this unity cannot be a lasting one. Perhaps because its very foundation is based on the 'haves' versus the 'have-nots'. True unity can come about only on a basis of equality. Unity through a common spiritual seeking—no matter by what route—is what the world is moving towards because this relationship treats everyone as equal. And the world unity can only be realised when everybody feels secure and equal.

Sri Aurobindo's vision is beginning to take shape and manifest itself in a fascinating way: the political process played its part, the economic event is taking it forward, science and technology have performed startlingly well to accelerate it. Now spirituality will play its final role.

RAMRAJ

A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS

(Continued from the issue of February 1996)

79. OUT OF THE ASHES

THE untimely demise of Poom Paavai shattered the daydreams of her father, Sivanesan Chettiar. He was a very rich trader, with several ships sailing the seas, and she was his only daughter.

Beautiful beyond comparison, Poom Paavai was the pride of Mylapore (in Madras). The dream-girl of every youngster, she rarely looked at any one of them for she had heard her father tell his friends thus:

“I have already made my choice. My would-be son-in-law is a great man. His knowledge of God is immense and his fame as a miracle-worker has spread far and wide. He can transform male palmyra trees into fruit-bearing ones. He can bring the dead back to life. His hymns not only cure snakebites and killer diseases, but also open doors that have remained tightly shut for ages.”

“Who can this be but Sambandar!” cried his friends in a chorus.

“Yes! You are right. My daughter Poom Paavai will be married off to Sambandar and all my riches and wealth will go with her as dowry. I hope my daydream will come true.”

Sivanesan Chettiar’s daydream didn’t come true. Poom Paavai was not yet in her teens when a cobra bit her. Her father brought in the best of physicians. But to what avail? He then sought the help of tantrics. But all mantras failed to cure the girl of the snakebite.

Poom Paavai died leaving her father and her dear ones to their tears.

Something in Sivanesan Chettiar said: “Don’t lose hope. Have faith in Lord Siva. Sambandar can work miracles in your life too.”

But where to find Sambandar immediately, when no one in Mylapore knew his whereabouts?

“Three days have passed. How long can we keep a dead body at home? Putrid smell has already filled the air,” grumbled the relatives.

Sivanesan Chettiar sighed a deep sigh, and muttered, “I am sure Sambandar will grace this city with his presence one day, and my daughter will come back to life.”

He then said to his people at home: “Let us cremate her.”

At the cremation ground, Sivanesan Chettiar ordered the ashes to be collected and stored in a small pot.

The pot of ashes was kept in a room of its own in the house and guarded by a couple of women. Sivanesan Chettiar performed pooja every day in that room and garlanded the pot.

Everyone took him for a madcap, though no one had the guts to tell him so. Years passed. Time didn't in any way deter the father's interest in his dead daughter.

The much-longed-for day dawned at last.

Sivanesan Chettiar jumped for joy when he heard the news of Sambandar's arrival at Thiru Votriyur, a few miles away from Mylapore. He ran faster than he had thought his legs could ever carry him. He met Sambandar and told him the sad story of his beloved daughter.

"Go now and bring the pot of ashes to the Kabaleeswarar temple at Mylapore and keep it outside its compound wall. I'll be there shortly," said Sambandar.

At the temple, Sambandar sang a series of songs, each one describing the festivals of the Tamils and addressing the ashes of Poom Paavai to come back to life to celebrate these festivals.

At the finish of the eighth song, a rumbling noise was heard from the pot. By the time he finished the tenth one, Poom Paavai stuck out her hand from inside the pot.

Sambandar continued to sing the next and last song. To the surprise and shock of the Buddhists and the Jains in Mylapore, the pot cracked and its sides fell apart. Poom Paavai rose to her feet and stood smiling gratefully at Sambandar.

"Take her home," Sambandar said to Sivanesan Chettiar.

"I would like you to marry my daughter and with her all my riches and wealth," suggested Sivanesan Chettiar.

Sambandar smiled. "You call her your daughter, but your daughter died of snakebite, and that was years ago. By the strength of my prayer to Lord Siva, I have given life to the dead girl. Am I not a father to her?"

Sivanesan Chettiar sighed, nodded his head and took Poom Paavai home.

Poom Paavai spent the rest of her life in the service of Lord Siva, and died of old age, still a virgin.

80. AN EXODUS INTO THE FIRE

Sambandar travelled to several parts of the Tamil land preaching the Saivite faith to the masses. Completing his first round, he returned to his native place, Seerkazhi, with the intention of meeting his parents and sojourning with them.

It was the happiest day in the lives of Siva Paadha Virudayar and Bagavathi. They joyfully spent several hours together with their son Sambandar.

A few days later Bagavathi said to her son, "It's time that you got married. You are sixteen."

Sambandar was shocked to hear his mother speak of marriage. He wanted to devote his life to wandering in all parts of the globe and preach Saivism. But his mother wanted him to get married and settle down.

Unable to say an outright 'no' to the wishes of his affectionate mother, Sambandar said, "Time is not yet ripe for all that."

"My son! You have spent the most important part of your life in the service of Lord Siva. Now that you have reached adulthood, you must adhere to our tradition and get married," advised Siva Paadha Virudayar.

"A wife will not in any way prove an obstacle in your chosen path. In fact, she will only be a support and a comfort. In order to enjoy the greater bliss, you must know first of all what bliss is. Only a devoted wife can show you that," suggested Bagavathi.

As his parents continued to insist on his marriage, Sambandar finally gave way.

The search for a suitable bride began. Finally the parents chose the most suitable one. She was the daughter of Nampaandar, a brahmin from Perumana Nallur, an adjacent village. Chokki was her name.

Sambandar's mind began to waver when his mother told him of his beautiful bride, Chokki.

The wedding day was fixed. Invitations were given to all the near and dear ones in person.

Perumana Nallur wore a festive look. All houses were decorated and the streets were beautified.

On the wedding day, friends and fans of Sambandar's thronged the marriage hall. The wedding ceremony began to the beating of drums and the blowing of pipes.

Elegantly dressed and garlanded, Sambandar and Chokki held each other's hand, and went around the wedding fire.

All of a sudden, Sambandar still holding his bride's hand moved out of the marriage hall and headed towards the nearby temple of Lord Siva.

"I never wanted to lead a married life. O Lord! Why have you brought in a woman in my life? Have mercy on me. If you have any love for me then take me and my wife into your fold," prayed Sambandar.

No sooner did he finish his prayer to Lord Siva than the entire temple was ablaze and rapidly transformed itself into a mammoth ball of fire.

The people who had followed the married couple to the temple ran helter-skelter.

A voice from the heavens said: "Enter with your wife and dear ones into the ball of fire and you'll all reach me."

Sambandar yelled at the panic-stricken people to come back and join him "We are all sparks that came out of that great fire. Let us go back to where we came from and attain salvation."

A big crowd consisting of the couple's parents, friends, relatives and several well-wishers jubilantly made its way into the ball of fire.

Finally Sambandar and his bride Chokki happily became one with the blaze. The huge ball of fire disappeared and there appeared the temple once again.

(More legends on the way)

P. RAJA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The Scoria: A Quarterly Magazine for the Connoisseur, Vol 1, No. 1, July 1995. Managing Editor: Urmula Mishra. Scintilla Publishers, 3228/1, Sector - 47D, Chandigarh - 160 047. Pp. 120. Rs. 14.

THE inaugural issue of *The Scoria* rewards readers with what it promises in its Editor's note: "to popularize contemporary literature" and "to provide a happy blend of literature and popular reading material at a comparatively low price." Modestly priced, it presents a variety of creative and critical writing, discussion and interview. More important, in keeping with the recent attention given to "new" literature in English, *Scoria's* list of contributors bears testimony to "decolonizing the canon" of English literature. From Native American female fictionist to Finnish poet, from Assamese to Israeli poetry in translation, the journal is a rich *smörgasbord*, but the main fare, to be sure, is served by Indian and American writers.

Qaiser Alam flags off the journal, marking its birth paradoxically, with a discussion of the modern-postmodern times as "the age of death." He quotes futurologists, philosophers, historians, pedagogists, literary critics and post-structural theorists who have regularly been announcing the death of everything—from God to literature. These "obituaries" no doubt are "grossly exaggerated," as Mark Twain once commented on reading a report of his own death in the newspaper. What is really needed, this article reminds us, is the death of such death announcements.

This is followed by an interview (a reprint) with Leslie Marmon Silko, the most celebrated Native American writer today. She is interviewed by Aruna Sitiesh after a nutshell introduction of and a critical nugget on Silko. This backdrop is thoughtfully provided for those readers to whom Silko would be an unfamiliar figure. The interview is long and comprehensive, dwelling on its subject's childhood, school days, her initiation to writing, issues of American "colonialism" from the (rare) perspective of a Native American, and conversely, the image of the "Native" American in the eyes of the white American, the processes of creative writing and, of course, feminism.

These are times when journals try to keep their poetry content to the minimum, like the commercial break on the TV or a floral adornment to a living room. It is laudable that one-fourth of the journal (some 25 pages) is devoted to poetry. Four poems by none less than Jayanta Mahapatra open the poetry section, which resound with thoughts of, yes, death, God and destruction by man. The intellectual quality of Mahapatra's poems is offset by what follows: poems of Edith Konecky, which are all about birth—of a poem, of a beginning, of herself; and these are marked by an emotional sincerity. Maxine Chernoff's poems, on the other hand, have an enigmatic quality about them. Thoughtfully,

a couple of short stories intervene to break the tedium of an extended poetry reading, after which there is a second section of poetry. This time it is a pot-pourri of British, Assamese, but mostly Indian poets. These poems are mostly light verse, after the serious pieces of the earlier section. Consider, for example, the tiny poem by P. Raja, a rising star in the galaxy of Indo-Anglian literature. Titled "An Epitaph on God," the poem runs:

Here at last rests Mr. Nobody
 who believed himself to have existed
 when Mr. Somebody made him Mr. Everybody.
 Let his soul, if he has one,
 rest in peace
 though he troubled all.

Contrast this with Jonathan Gourlay's 5-page narrative poem, a poetic expression of his experiences in China. Nandini Sahu has been selected "The Poet of the Issue." Her poem is an ode to the butterfly and reverberates at the end with the theme of—you have guessed right again—death! *The Scoria* has a separate section for poems in translation—from Israel, Finland, and India. Of these "The Taj", a Bengali poem, tries to rewrite history by seeing the Taj Mahal as a monument to the sorrow of Mumtaz and not to Shahjahan's love.

Two short stories, both by American women writers, provide a study in contrast. The first one is mostly dialogue and objective while the second is mainly authorial narration and a subjective expression. A brief life-sketch and a spreadout of the ideas of the recently dead C. Northcote Parkinson, "the superwit of our times", "the management guru", begin—with a mention of his death! In simple terms and easy language Tariq Ali introduces to the readers the famous laws of Parkinson. Ali Khwaja's article makes out a case for "the oppressed majority" of animals and birds. Humans are not human and animals are not beastly, reminds Tariq. The two terms need to be redefined in the light of man's beastly treatment of the innocent animals. It is shameful that in the country which saw the birth of Mahavira and which has the largest vegetarian population in the world, frogs' thighs are chopped and exported, and dozens of chickens tied together and hung upside down in scorching sun is a common sight, Tariq observes. It is our attitude of superiority which is responsible for our "animal" behaviour, the same sense of superiority being the cause of much communal violence and intolerance, the author comments insightfully.

"Thirty-four years back, Hemingway shot himself to death." So begins Tirtho Banerjee's thumbnail sketch of Papa Hemingway's personal life! This is followed by Shyam Agarwal's long essay-review of *The Sutable Boy*, which places its author Vikram Seth in F. R. Leavis's Great Tradition of Jane Austen and Dickens. The setting of this novel is the post-independence scenario of

middle-class Indian life of the Nehruvian era in the early 50s. The reviewer compares this portrayal of life in *The Suitable Boy* with its depiction by Nayantara Sehgal and other Indo-Anglian novelists in their works. A baggy monster of a novel of more than 600,000 words, it contains hundreds of characters and is comparable to such voluminous classics of world literature as *War and Peace*, *Dr. Zhivago* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*. This detailed analysis of Agarwal's is somewhat marred by his unclear style, leaving readers often puzzled about which work he is talking of in a particular line or paragraph—*A Suitable Boy* or any of its fictional parallels.

For those who want a quick scan, there is a brief 3-page review of *Her Testimony*, a collection of interviews conducted by Aruna Sitiesh. The interviewees are all contemporary women writers who are permanently settled in the US, and the reviewer calls *Her Testimony* a landmark in the annals of literary reviews similar to the famous *Paris Review* interviews. The last page of *The Scoria* is a "Platform" for Ved Prakash Goyal who claims to have discovered an unflinching ayurvedic cure for AIDS. Any takers?

The print and paper quality of *The Scoria* is very good but the proofreading leaves a lot to be desired. No doubt, its publishers would have noticed it by this time and would ensure that forthcoming issues are free of "typos" The journal is sure to go a long way, but must find advertisers (there is none in this issue) to sustain it and to survive the costs of publishing.

The birth of this magazine, as pointed out earlier, is marked by a discussion or at least mention of death in almost everyone of its features. Is it an editorial hint that birth and death are two sides of the same coin and should not be thought of as separate phenomena? In keeping with the spirit of the times, the editorial board and the contributors consist of more than a fair share of women.

P. RAMASAMY

THE TWO TEXTS OF THE GITA: ORIGINAL AND EDITED

1. The Original Text of the Gita

WE know that the Bhagavadgita has been written as a dialogue between Arjuna and Lord Krishna, two prominent figures in the story of the Mahabharata. The author of the story narrates in the Gita an episode connected with Arjuna. Arjuna comes to the battlefield with Krishna as his charioteer. Overcome by a sudden psychological crisis, he finds himself a bewildered hero, a victim of faint-heartedness, fear and delusion. Having dropped his arms, he expresses his disinclination to fight. Krishna is surprised at this sudden reversal in Arjuna's attitude. At the end of a protracted effort Krishna succeeds in removing Arjuna's fear and delusion. And Arjuna returns to his original self and agrees to do his appointed work, the terrible task of destruction, *karmani ghore*. The whole episode is told in about 700 verses, all replete with profound insights into yoga and the teachings of Vedanta.

Arjuna's episode is originally cast in eighteen chapters, each of which carries a separate chapter-number—the first begins with the number 23 and the last closes with the number 40. No title is found at the head of any of these chapters; they are identified merely by their serial numbers. In view of its profound bearings on the Upanishads, the Gita is regarded as a fundamental text of Vedanta. With the Upanishads and the Brahmasutras it occupies the position of a third authoritative work, *prasthāna trayam*. Great scholars hold the view that it is a commentary on the Upanishads and must be studied as such. As a result of its steep ascension to this supreme status, it has practically become an independent text winning admiration and appreciation from all sides, from sages to ordinary mortals, from scholars to laymen. It is reasonable to suppose that the Gita attained this eminence even before Shankara's advent.

2. The Edited Text of the Gita

Once the Gita becomes a separate work it is but natural that new chapter-numbers are given and appropriate titles added to its chapters. There is no difficulty in accepting the new numbers in place of the original ones. But in respect of the titles there are considerable difficulties. If we examine the old manuscripts, we realise that the chapter-titles were evolved differently by different editors. However, one of the edited texts chosen by Shankara has been in wide circulation among the learned men of our country. It forms the basis of his commentary on the Gita. The approval his commentary has won from scholars has finally turned into an approval by them of the edited text he has used. The same text is used even by those who have written rival commentaries on the Gita, like Madhva and Tilak. Minor variations in the titles in these

commentaries are there, but they are too insignificant to merit serious consideration. Thus the text used by Shankara has come to be accepted as the most reliable one by all scholars irrespective of their religious or philosophical affiliations. Nonetheless, there are other commentators like those of Ramanuja and Sri Aurobindo who bypass the edited text and at the same time accept the new in place of the original chapter-numbers. Following are the titles in the order in which they are given in the edited text:

- (1) Arjunavishada yoga.
- (2) Sankhya yoga.
- (3) Karma yoga.
- (4) Jnana-Karmasannyasa yoga.
- (5) Sannyasa yoga.
- (6) Dhyana yoga.
- (7) Jnana-Vijnana yoga.
- (8) Akshara-Brahma yoga.
- (9) Rajavidya-Rajaguhya yoga.
- (10) Vibhuti yoga.
- (11) Vishvarupa-darshana yoga.
- (12) Bhakti yoga.
- (13) Kshetra-Kshetrajna-vibhaga yoga.
- (14) Gunatraya-vibhaga yoga.
- (15) Purushottama yoga.
- (16) Daivasurasampad-vibhaga yoga.
- (17) Shraddhatraya-vibhaga yoga.
- (18) Moksha-Sannyasa yoga

Another notable feature of this text is that in the colophons the Gita is described in identical terms—this is the Upanishad, the Brahmavidya, the Yogashastra, Shri Krishna-Arjuna-Samvada. As a matter of fact, it is the colophons that make the difference between the original and the edited texts, otherwise both are the same.

3. The Chapter-Title and Its Two Parts

Generally, the commentaries on the edited text do not comment upon the significance of the words in the colophon, for they believe that they are self-evident and do not stand in need of elaboration. This is true of all words except the ones which appear as the chapter-titles. From time immemorial the titles have been associated with the text of the Gita. But unfortunately they have not succeeded in drawing the attention of the commentators.

In each chapter the title is designed to perform an intended function—to tell

us, however briefly, what a given chapter is about. It helps us a great deal in reaching the heart of that chapter without much difficulty. In fact, there are two parts in every title, part one comprising the key words of the relevant verse and part two having an identical word, namely, *yoga*, to be found in all the eighteen titles. A right understanding of the titles is possible only when the two parts in each one of them are rightly understood.

We shall now try to find how each title is related to the content of its chapter. The numbers given below have a triple reference—(i) to the chapters, (ii) to the titles, both in descending order, and (iii) to the series in which each title is traced to the relevant verse in the given chapter.

- (1) Verse 1-47, where Arjuna is shown to have dropped his arms in distress and sorrow, *śokasamvignamānasah*.
- (2) Verse 2-39, where the Lord says that the intelligent knowledge in the Sankhya has been declared to Arjuna, *eṣā te 'bhūhitā sāṅkhye buddhiḥ*.
- (3) Verse 3-19, where the Gita teaches that by doing works without attachment man attains to the Highest, *asakto hyācaran karma paramāpnoti*.
- (4) Verse 4-19, where it is stated that all undertakings done without the will of desire become faultless by the purifying effect of knowledge, *jñānāgni dagdha karmāṇaḥ*.
- (5) Verse 5-10, where the Gita says that he who reposes his works on Brahman, having abandoned attachment, is not stained by sin, *lipyate na sa pāpena / karmāni saṅgaṁ tyaktvā karoti yah*.
- (6) Verse 6-25, where we are asked to fix the mind in the higher Self without thinking of anything else, *ātmasamsthaṁ manaḥkṛtvā na kiñcidapi cintayet*.
- (7) Verse 7-2, where that knowledge, Jnana and Vijnana, by knowing which there shall not be anything here left to be known, is declared by the Lord, *bhūyo 'nyaj jñātavyam avaśiṣyate*.
- (8) Verse 8-21, where Krishna teaches that the unmanifest Immutable is the supreme goal, *avyakto'kṣara ityuktas tamāhuh paramām gatim*.
- (9) Verse 9-2, where Krishna discloses to Arjuna the king-knowledge, the king-secret, which is pure and supreme, imperishable and directly realisable, the very law of being and easy to practise, *rājavidyā rājaguhyam*.
- (10) Verse 10-19, in which Krishna agrees to tell Arjuna such of his self-manifestations as are very prominent, *ātmavibhūtayah prādhānyataḥ*.
- (11) Verse 11-47, in which the Lord says that he has shown Arjuna his supreme form, *rūpaṁ paraṁ darśitam*.
- (12) Verse 12-17, in which the Gita declares that he who is full of devotion is dear to the Lord, *bhaktimānyah sa me priyah*.

- (13) Verse 13-2, which defines true knowledge as knowledge about Kshetra and Kshetrajna, *ksetra ksetrajñayor / jñānam yat taj jñānam*.
- (14) Verse 14-5, which speaks about the triple bondage of the embodied being, arising from the three Prakriti-born Gunas, *gunāḥ prakṛti-sambhavāḥ*.
- (15) Verse 15-17, which declares that the Purushottama, the imperishable Lord, enters and upholds the three worlds, *uttamaḥ purusaḥ . . . lokatramāviśya bimbhartavyaya īśvarah*.
- (16) Verse 16-6, which mentions that there are two categories of beings in the world, one embodying godly qualities and the other ungodly ones, *daiva āsura eva ca*
- (17) Verse 17-2, which says that the faith inherent in the embodied beings is threefold, *trivīdhā bhavati śraddhā*.
- (18) Verse 18-66, in which the Gita speaks about the abandonment of the Dharmas and the liberation promised to be conferred upon Arjuna who is asked to surrender to the Lord, *sarvadharmān parityajya māmekam śaraṇam vraja aham tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣisyāmi*.

Thus we find that all chapter-titles of the Gita are invariably made out of the verses chosen for this purpose. This shows clearly that the titles have been evolved after a careful study of the entire Gita, chapter by chapter.

As for the word Yoga which is the last to appear in the titles, it is very often understood to mean a spiritual method by which the soul is united with the Lord of the world, yoga sadhana. There are three reasons why the word is so taken. (i) In the colophon the Gita is described to be a yoga shastra, a science which deals with the various forms of yoga sadhana. (ii) In the text of the Gita itself the word Yoga is frequently used in this sense. (iii) More important than the two is that *prima facie* this sense is applicable to the word in certain titles such as the third (Karmayoga), the fifth (Sannyasayoga), the sixth (Dhyanayoga) and the twelfth (Bhaktiyoga). As a result, it is maintained that the word in the chapter-titles be understood as referring to a yoga sadhana. As an example, *arjunaviśāda yoga*, the first of the eighteen titles, is interpreted keeping in view this sense of the word. Some argue that dejection has a unique value for Arjuna. For it makes him completely detached, detached from all results that bring enjoyment in this world and in the world beyond. He himself tells us that he has no desire for any kingdom, much less for the kingdom of the three worlds. Therefore they conclude that *arjunaviśāda yoga* is intended to emphasise this fact—dejection has a yogic value and through dejection Arjuna develops into a renouncer of desires fit for the full ascetic life. In principle the argument sounds reasonable and can help us in understanding the right sense of the word Yoga in the chapter-titles.

4. The Word Yoga and Its True Sense in the Titles of the Gita

We shall analyse the interpretation put on the first title *arjunaviṣāda yoga* and see how far it is satisfactory.

(i) To say that Arjuna is free from the desires of the heart on account of his dejection is far from the truth. On his own admission Arjuna rejects enjoyment and kingdom because he is attached to his people, *svajanam* (1-31) and does not want to kill them. Even if we grant that he has risen to a spiritually praiseworthy position Krishna does not find any such merit in his dejection. He uses strong words and abuses him by saying that his conduct is unmanly and a result of fear, *klaibyam hr̥dayadaurbalyam*. Though dejection can make a man detached, it has not definitely worked that way in the case of Arjuna. If Arjuna's dejection does not make him really detached, then it is wrong to argue that the word Yoga in the first title is used in a sense connected with yoga sadhana.

(ii) For the sake of argument we may still say that dejection has put Arjuna on the right way to the ascetic life. If this justifies the use of the word Yoga in *arjunaviṣāda yoga*, it is clearly used in the sense of something which produces a yogic result. Dejection may produce this result, but it cannot be a yoga sadhana. For the latter not only produces a yogic result but is mainly a willed process of self-development, as in Karma Yoga or Bhakti Yoga. If the word Yoga is understood in the sense of a yoga sadhana, then *arjunaviṣāda yoga* is merely a maimed yoga or, strictly speaking, no yoga. Therefore we cannot argue that *arjunaviṣāda yoga* is a yoga like Sannyasa Yoga or Dhyana Yoga.

(iii) The lesson we learn from the foregoing discussions is that if we give the sense of yoga sadhana to the word Yoga in the titles such as Karma Yoga, Sannyasa Yoga, Dhyana Yoga, etc., it cannot be extended to other titles in the Gita. Its inapplicability to them is more in evidence in chapters like the Vibhuti Yoga or the Vishwarupadarshana Yoga.

Truly speaking, neither of these Yogas can be regarded as a willed process of self-development. Listening to an account of self-manifestations from Krishna or even getting a vision of the Maheshwara form of Krishna may have a profound effect upon the soul of Arjuna, but by that alone without a conscious self-effort his soul cannot realise its oneness with the law of being of the Lord of the world, *sādharmyam* (14-2). This explains why, even after showing his universal form to Arjuna, Krishna is asking him to practise Yoga: "On Me repose all your mind and lodge all your understanding in Me; there is no doubt that you shall live in Me" (12-8).

In view of these difficulties it is advisable not to give a spiritual significance to the word Yoga in the chapter-titles. This springs a surprise on us because we do not know how in a text which expounds yoga shastra the word Yoga can be

used in a non-spiritual sense. Yet it is a veritable fact about the titles of the Gita and one who tries to understand their right significance must recognise this fact.

If the word Yoga in the chapter-titles does not give the sense of yoga sadhana, what else is the sense in which it is associated with these titles? Before we discover its real sense we should keep in mind two things: (1) all chapter-titles are invariably related to some verse or other in the texts they represent; (ii) the word Yoga which is made to qualify all chapter-titles must have a uniform sense which does not change when the first part in the titles changes. Apart from the spiritual sense, the word has many other senses. Of them one is relevant here—connection, *sambandha*. Every title is not only related to some verse in the given chapter but made to stand at the head of it, for it is intended to tell us that the idea embodied in it serves as the master-idea which links together all other ideas in that chapter. It stands for the central idea upon which all the rest converge and by which all of them become cogent and meaningful. In other words, the title in each chapter is intended to be a connecting principle which illumines the whole, *pradhāna-viśaya-sambandha-kāraṇam*. That it serves as a connecting factor in the verses of the relevant chapter is aptly indicated by the word *yogaḥ* which means a relation, a connection.

Once the word Yoga in the titles is taken in the sense of a connecting factor it is easy to understand their natural significance. They have a textual function and this function is to tell us about the leading idea in each chapter and help us to understand its verses in the light of this idea. Take any chapter-title in the Gita; this interpretation works wonderfully well. To illustrate, we shall choose the title Purushottama Yoga. This is the title of the fifteenth chapter. It, as we know (see section 2), is based on the seventeenth verse of this chapter. The word Yoga in the above title tells us that the whole chapter becomes well-connected when viewed in the light of this verse. All other titles in the Gita have to be interpreted along the same lines. The titles like Karma Yoga, Sannyasa Yoga etc which were originally considered to be reliable aids in fixing the right sense of Yoga now give us a more consistent, a more appropriate and comprehensive sense than before. In the same way the titles like Vibhuti Yoga, Vishwadarshana Yoga etc. cease to be difficult in the matter of understanding their whole sense; now they yield their true sense easily and fall in line with the other chapters of the Gita. Finally, *arjunaviśāda yoga* has nothing to do with the consequence of Arjuna's dejection, spiritual or ascetic; its aim is to simply tell us that the connecting factor in the first chapter is *arjunaviśāda* or the verse which contains this idea.

N. JAYASHANMUKHAM

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Thirty-second Annual Conference

13 August 1995

MANTRA AND JAPA IN SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

Speech by Arvind Akki

THE topic for this conference that I have chosen is, "Mantra and Japa in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga". Modern men seem to be indifferent towards our ancient practices of Mantra and Japa. Though they are familiar with them, they do not really know the extraordinary results that these ancient practices can produce if rightly followed.

What is Mantra? The Mantra, says Sri Aurobindo, "... is a word of power and light that comes from the Overmind inspiration or from some very high plane of Intuition."¹

Sri Aurobindo further says, "The Mantra is... at once a symbol, an instrument and a sound body for the divine manifestation, and of the same kind are the images of the Godhead and of its personalities or powers used in meditation or for adoration in Yoga."²

What is the power of the Mantra? What is it capable of? In ancient times during wars like Mahabharata magic archeries were used for fighting. An arrow was shot with a charged Mantra behind it and it could uproot hundreds of enemies. Such is the power of Mantra! The full extent of this power and the results it can produce are very clearly stated by Sri Aurobindo in these words: "The Mantra can not only create new subjective states in ourselves, alter our psychical being, reveal knowledge and faculties we did not possess, can not only produce similar results in other minds than that of the user, but can produce vibrations in the mental and vital atmosphere which result in effects, in actions and even in the production of material forms on the physical plane."³

A Mantra is not always an individual property. Most of them are of general use and can be adopted by anyone. Only, one must be careful in selecting and applying it for particular purposes. If it is not the right and beneficial one it may give odd and harmful results. If a Mantra is given by a Guru, it is so much the better, and then its purpose is fulfilled within a small span of time with his blessings and the power that is put behind it. There is a saying, "A human teacher imparts a Mantra to the ear; the divine Teacher imparts it to the soul."⁴

According to Sri Aurobindo, "Mantras come to many people in medita-

tion.”⁵ Sometimes its expression can deceive us if it comes from the lower consciousness. In our sleep-state we have occasionally experienced that whenever we are in the midst of a great danger we at once utter the name of the Mother to help and protect us. Such calls come to us quite spontaneously for we have faith in the name.

स्वाध्यादिष्टदेवतासम्प्रयोगः

“By the repetition of the Mantras comes the realisation of the chosen (intended) deity.” Sri Aurobindo also says: “Namajapa has a great power in it.”⁶

The word ‘Rama’ was given to a notorious dacoit by Narada as a Mantra. By repeating it often it helped him to concentrate his mind on the image of Rama with one-pointed devotion. As a result Sri Rama manifested in his mind and illumined him and this was the new turn of his life. He later developed into one of the greatest poets the world has ever produced. Do you know who he was? He was indeed the great Valmiki, the author of the master-epic Ramayana!

The act of repeating holy names and Mantras is known as Japa. If it is done mechanically then it is useless. It is simply straining the mind unnecessarily.

A devotee asked Sri Ramakrishna. “Is it good to practise Japa?” To this the latter replied: “One attains God through japa. By repeating the name of God secretly and in solitude one receives divine grace. Then comes His vision... Higher than worship is japa, higher than japa is meditation, higher than meditation is bhāva, and higher than bhāva are mahābhāva and prema.”⁷ On another occasion he said, “Japa means silently repeating God’s name in solitude. When you chant His name with single-minded devotion you can see God’s form and realise Him.”⁸

Though some of our Mantras are thousands of years old their power is not yet worn out. They are like living beings. As when a seed is put into the soil and with proper nourishment is bound to grow, so also with the Mantra. When the seed of a Mantra is sown in our heart and when it is properly nourished with faith, love, and devotion, it will grow in us and give its intended results to our being.

Sri Aurobindo says, “When one repeats a mantra regularly, very often it begins to repeat itself within, which means that it is taken up by the inner being. In that way it is more effective.”⁹

According to Sri Aurobindo “The japa is usually successful only on one of two conditions—if it is repeated with a sense of its significance, a dwelling of something in the mind on the nature, power, beauty, attraction of the Godhead it signifies and is to bring into the consciousness,—that is the mental way; or if it comes up from the heart or rings in it with a certain sense or feeling of bhakti making it alive,—that is the emotional way .. There is, of course, a third way, the reliance on the power of the mantra or name in itself...”¹⁰

Sri Aurobindo also says, “Verses of the Gita can be used as japa, if the object is to realise the Truth that the verses contain in them.”¹¹ And he adds, “OM if rightly used (not mechanically) might very well help the opening upwards and outwards (cosmic consciousness) as well as the descent.”¹²

What is the place of Mantra in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo? The answer given by Sri Aurobindo is: “In this yoga there is no fixed mantra, no stress is laid on mantras, although sadhaks can use one if they find it helpful or so long as they find it helpful.”¹³ But is there a general mantra which can be used by everybody? Sri Aurobindo answers, “As a rule the only mantra used in this sadhana is that of the Mother or of my name and the Mother’s.”¹⁴

I suppose all of us know the celebrated Gayatri mantra. It is one of the holiest verses of the Vedas:

तत् सवितुर्वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि ।
धियो यो न प्रचोदयात् ॥

“We meditate upon that excellent splendour of the Lord Savitur. May he activate our thoughts.” Sri Aurobindo says, “The Gayatri mantra is the mantra for bringing the light of Truth into all the planes of the being.”¹⁵ And he explains its spiritual significance thus: “The power of Gayatri is the Light of the divine Truth. It is a mantra of Knowledge.”¹⁶

Sri Aurobindo himself has given his own version of the Gayatri mantra which I quote:

ततस्सवितुर्वरं रूपं ज्योतिः परस्य धीमहि ।
यन्नः सत्त्वेन दीपयेत् ॥

“Let us meditate on the most auspicious (best) form of Savitri, on the Light of the Supreme which shall illumine us with the Truth.”¹⁷

I shall now mention a few well-known mantras of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The following mantra was given by Sri Aurobindo at the request of a sadhak with Sri Aurobindo’s and Mother’s name on it:

“Om Sri AurobindoMira
Open my mind, my heart, my life to your Light, your Love, your Power.
In all things may I see the Divine.”¹⁸

Another mantra of Sri Aurobindo on the Mother is:

ॐ आनन्दमयि चैतन्यमयि सत्यमयि परमे ।¹⁹

“Om! O Mother of Delight, O Mother of Consciousness, O Mother of Truth, O the Supreme!”

The next two mantras are by the Mother:

श्रीअरविन्द शरणं मम ।

“Sri Aurobindo is my refuge” and

श्रीमाता च श्रीअरविन्दश्च शरणं मम ।

“mothersriaurobindo is my refuge.”²⁰

In 1971 the Mother gave this mantra for all the people of the nation for relief from the present world-crisis:

“Supreme Lord, Eternal Truth, let us obey Thee alone and live according to Truth.”²¹

The *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother* can well serve us as an aid to mantras.

Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri* is the greatest epic that the world has ever produced. It does not belong or confine itself to a nation. It belongs to the whole humanity. It is the history of evolution of the whole of mankind as well as the whole cosmos and as such it has to be accepted by all as the holiest epic of mankind. The Mother has said, “Each verse of *Savitri* is like a revealed Mantra which surpasses all that man possessed by way of knowledge and, I repeat this, the words are expressed and arranged in such a way that the sonority of the rhythm leads you to the origin of sound, which is OM.”²²

To conclude the subject, I shall read some lines from *Savitri* where Sri Aurobindo beautifully reveals the secret working process of the Mantra:

“As when the mantra sinks in Yoga’s ear,
Its message enters stirring the blind brain
And keeps in the dim ignorant cells its sound;
The hearer understands a form of words
And, musing on the index thought it holds,
He strives to read it with the labouring mind,
But finds bright hints, not the embodied truth:
Then, falling silent in himself to know
He meets the deeper listening of his soul:
The Word repeats itself in rhythmic strains:

Thought, vision, feeling, sense, the body's self
 Are seized unalterably and he endures
 An ecstasy and an immortal change;
 He feels a Wideness and becomes a Power,
 All knowledge rushes on him like a sea:
 Transmuted by the white spiritual ray
 He walks in naked heavens of joy and calm,
 Sees the God-face and hears transcendent speech:...'”²³

References

- 1 *The Future Poetry* (Cent Ed , Vol 9), p 369
- 2 *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 21), p 848
- 3 *The Upanishads* (Cent Ed , Vol 12), pp 169-170
- 4 Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, p 399
- 5 *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 23), p 749
- 6 *Ibid* , p 746
- 7 *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Vol II (1985 Edition), p 588
- 8 *Ibid* , p 878
- 9 *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 23), p 748
- 10 *Ibid* , p 745
- 11 *Ibid* , p 748
- 12 *Ibid* , p 746
- 13 *Ibid*
- 14 *Ibid*
- 15 *Ibid* , p 747
- 16 *Ibid*
- 17 *On Himself* (Cent Ed , Vol 26), p 513
- 18 *Ibid* , p 512
- 19 *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent Ed , Vol 13), p 32
- 20 *The Mother* (Cent Ed , Vol 25), p 79
- 21 *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent Ed , Vol 13), p 379
- 22 Mona Sarkar, *Sweet Mother, Harmonies of Light* (1978 Edition), p 25
- 23 *Savitri* (Cent Ed , Vol 29), p 375

The Indian Scriptures and the Life Divine

by Dr. Binita Pani, with a preface by M.P. Pandit.

Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, 110026, 1993, pp. 367. HB, Price Rs. 400.