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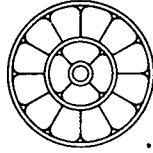
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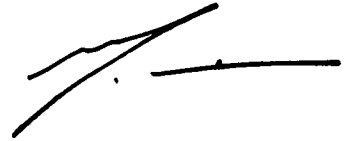
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLIX

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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# THE MOTHER ON DEALING WITH PEOPLE

## INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN AT HER ORDER

*(This Message on behaviour, originally with an important particular bearing, has on the whole a general reference of equal importance, as some parts of the guidance given make it quite clear.)*

THE MOTHER wants that the people responsible for receiving the visitors should always be very polite and gentle in their behaviour towards them. High and low, young and old, whether they are well-dressed or ill-clad, all should always be received properly with benevolence and good behaviour. It is not necessary that the better dressed people may be more fit for being received well in this Ashram. It should not be that we give more care to the people with a motor car than to an ordinary man looking like a beggar. We must never forget that they are as much human as we are and we have no right to think that we are at the top of the scale.

And our politeness should not be merely an outer form, stiff politeness, so to say. It must be something coming from within. Whatever may be the difficulties and whatever may be the circumstances—the Mother fully knows even to the minutest detail the circumstances, when we lose our temper and get irritated in our work, and knowing that fully well she says—whatever may be the circumstances, rudeness or curt behaviour is never permissible.

There are difficulties in our way, but the Mother says that as a rule our difficulties and our troubles are always such that we do have the capacity of overcoming them. If we can remain at our best we shall always be able to tackle the situation without losing control. Remember, each time we lose control of ourselves, each time we get angry or we have to use the outer means of keeping discipline, it means that at that moment we have fallen low and we could not rise to the situation. In everything, in every way, it boils down to one rule—always endeavour to make progress, try to be your true self. Even if you have not been able to do it today you must be able to do it tomorrow. But the full effort must be there. Never forget in your action that you are representing the Ashram. People will judge the Ashram from your behaviour. Even if you have to say No, even if you have to reject somebody's request you can do it with all politeness and courtesy. Try to help each one. Even if others are rude to you it is not a reason for you to do likewise. If you behave in the same way as the outsiders do, then what is the fun of your being here?

9.5.1957

\*

A good advice to all the Ashramites in their dealings with visitors and foreigners (and even among themselves)

“When you have nothing pleasant to say about something or somebody in the Ashram, *keep silent*

You must know that this silence is faithfulness to the Divine’s work.”

*(Collected Works of the Mother, Vol 13, pp 172-73, 150)*

## FOUR LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO ON WIDENESS AND CALM

AT last you have the true foundation of the sadhana. This calm, peace and surrender are the right atmosphere for all the rest to come, knowledge, strength, Ananda. Let it become complete.

It does not remain when engaged in work because it is still confined to the mind proper which has only just received the gift of silence. When the new consciousness is fully formed and has taken entire possession of the vital nature and the physical being (the vital as yet is only touched or dominated by the silence, not possessed by it), then this defect will disappear.

The quiet consciousness of peace you now have in the mind must become not only calm but wide. You must feel it everywhere, yourself in it and all in it. This also will help to bring the calm as a basis into the action.

The wider your consciousness becomes, the more you will be able to receive from above. The Shakti will be able to descend and bring strength and light as well as peace into the system. What you feel as narrow and limited in you is the physical mind; it can only widen if this wider consciousness and the light come down and possess the nature.

The physical inertia from which you suffer is likely to lessen and disappear only when strength from above descends into the system.

Remain quiet, open yourself and call the divine Shakti to confirm the calm and peace, to widen the consciousness and to bring into it as much light and power as it can at present receive and assimilate.

Take care not to be over-eager, as this may disturb again such quiet and balance as has been already established in the vital nature.

Have confidence in the final result and give time for the Power to do its work.

\*

If not aspiration, at least keep the idea of what is necessary—(1) that the silence and peace shall become a wideness which you can realise as the Self—(2) the extension of the silent consciousness upwards as well so that you may feel its source above you—(3) the presence of peace etc., all the time. These things need not all come at once, but by realising what has to be in your mind, any falling towards a condition of inertia can be avoided.

\*

Wideness and calmness are the foundation of the yogic consciousness and the



best condition for inner growth and experience. If a wide calm can be established in the physical consciousness, occupying and filling the very body and all its cells, that can become the basis for its transformation, in fact, without this wideness and calmness the transformation is hardly possible.

\*

If you keep the wideness and calm and also the love for the Mother in the heart, then all is safe, for it means the double foundation of yoga: the descent of the higher consciousness with its peace, freedom and serenity from above and the openness of the psychic which keeps all the effort or all the spontaneous movement turned towards the true goal.

*(Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol 23, pages 657-58, 660)*

## “BORN OF A WOMAN”

### ST. PAUL AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE VIRGINAL CONCEPTION

As the Letters of Paul constitute the earliest Christian witness, an important question in regard to the earliest Christianity and hence by implication Christianity as originally promulgated is: Does Paul know the doctrine of Mary's virginal conception of Jesus?

Here the most discussed passage is one that occurs in Galatians. The eminent Roman Catholic commentator, Raymond E. Brown,<sup>1</sup> approaches it through a glance at the general New-Testament situation: “It is beyond dispute that there is no explicit reference to the virginal conception in the NT outside the infancy narratives [in Matthew and Luke]. What is a matter of dispute is whether there are some implicit references.... In Galatians 4:4-5 Paul says, ‘When the time had fully come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law.’ Influenced perhaps by the (mis)use of the term ‘virgin birth,’ some (Zahn, Miguens) have immediately thought of a virginal conception here, since only the mother is mentioned. To be precise, however, Paul is speaking about the reality of Jesus’ *birth*, not about the manner of his conception. The phrase ‘born of a woman’ is meant to stress what Jesus shared with those whom he redeemed, precisely because it was applicable to everyone who walks this earth. It no more supports the virginal conception of Jesus than the figurative phrase ‘born of the seed of David’ in Romans 1:3 disproves it. A more serious argument for Paul’s knowledge of the virginal conception has been advanced from Paul’s custom of writing in terms of Jesus’ being ‘born’ (the verb *ginesshai* in Gal 4:4; Rom 1:3; Philippians 2:7) rather than of his being ‘begotten’ (the verb *gennan*, used of Ishmael and Isaac in Gal 4:23, 24, 290). However, both these verbs in the middle or passive can mean ‘be born’ and ‘be begotten;’ and neither one really tells us anything specific about the manner of conception. For example, Matthew, who believes in the virginal conception, does use the verb *gennan* of Jesus once, at least, clearly with the meaning ‘begotten’ (1:20...). Without further indication of Paul’s mind, it would be abusive to read a knowledge of virginal conception into Paul’s use of *ginesshai*.”

In the middle of his observation, after the words “applicable to everyone who walks this earth” Brown has the footnote: “See Matt 11.11 and Luke 7:28: Among *those born* (begotten) *of women*, none is greater than John the Baptist.”

At the end of his treatment of “The Silence of the Rest of the New Testament”, which takes up as “major texts that have been proposed” passages both from the Gospel of Mark and from the Johannine writings no less than the cullings from the Pauline Letters, Brown<sup>2</sup> pronounces: “In summary evaluation of the evidence, I would say that it is perfectly proper to speak of the silence of

the rest of the NT about the virginal conception because not a single one of the 'implicit references' has any compelling force. On the other hand, one would misinterpret this silence if one concluded from it that no other author of the NT (outside of Matthew and Luke) knew of the virginal conception. Even where the virginal conception was known and accepted, it would have become the subject of preaching (and therefore likely to be included in the kind of writing we have in the NT) only when its christological significance was seen. What the silence of the rest of the NT does call into question is the theory that the memory of the virginal conception was handed down by the family of Jesus to the apostolic preachers and was universally accepted as fundamental Christian belief."

If the theory to which Brown alludes is seriously to be questioned, the odds against a neutral attitude towards the silence of the twenty-five out of the twenty-seven books of the NT seem rather heavy. They grow more patently heavy when we find Brown dismissing as "untenable" the "simplistic" thesis that the Matthean infancy narrative, in which the angel of the Lord announced Mary's virginal conception to Joseph, came from Joseph and that the Lucan infancy narrative, where the announcement is to Mary herself, came from her. The very idea of an angelic announcement or, to use the technical term, annunciation derives, in Brown's opinion,<sup>4</sup> from an Old-Testament pattern of describing divine revelation, and "thus there is no reason to think that a narrative about an annunciation came down from the parents". The crucial point for Brown to settle is "whether the experiential knowledge that the child had been conceived without a human father" had its origin in one or the other or both of them. He suggests that "the complete absence of Joseph during the ministry of Jesus makes Mary a more plausible channel". But "the real difficulty about a preserved family (Marian) tradition. . . is the failure of that memory to have had any effect before its appearance in two Gospels in the last third of the first century" Brown adds: "There is a strong tradition that the brothers of Jesus did not believe in him during the ministry (John 7:5; Mark 3:21, followed by 3:31)—did Mary not communicate his divine origins to them? Did not the virginal conception carry for Mary some implication as to who Jesus was? In the few ministry scenes in which she appears, historical or not, there is no memory that she showed any such understanding (Mark 3:31-35; John 2:3-4). And certainly she communicated no profound christological understanding to his followers who came to understand only after the resurrection and, indeed, at first seem to have proclaimed that Jesus had *become* Messiah, Lord, or Son of God *through the resurrection*, never mentioning the virginal conception. The family tradition thesis is not impossible, but it faces formidable difficulties."

There is an alternative thesis proposed. According to the narratives, "Jesus was born noticeably early after his parents came to live together. Is this an historical fact?"<sup>5</sup> There is "the Jewish charge of illegitimacy as it is clearly documented from the second century onwards in both Christian and Jewish

witnesses”<sup>6</sup> If that charge circulated in the first century independently of the Gospels, Mary’s pregnancy without her husband’s co-operation would be taken by the Christians—unlike the opponents of Jesus who “would deem him illegitimate and Mary unfaithful”—as a sign of virginal conception, “for they had a widespread and firm belief that Jesus was totally free of sin (II Corinthians 5:21; I Peter 2:22, Hebrews 4:15; I John 3:5) and both Matthew and Luke present his parents as holy and righteous (Matt 1:19; Luke 1:42)”.<sup>7</sup> To this positive explanation, “perhaps.. family tradition was an auxiliary”. Brown sees “an interplay of many factors” building up the positive explanation, but he adds: “This complicated solution, although it reflects items from the meager evidence we possess, leaves many questions unanswered (e.g., Mary’s understanding of all this); and so it remains quite tenuous.”<sup>8</sup>

Besides, as Brown<sup>9</sup> admits, “there is no way to know with certainty whether the post-NT charge of illegitimacy is an authentic recollection of Jewish charges that were circulating before Matthew composed his narrative”. Nor does Brown<sup>10</sup> discover any firm support in the two other Gospels—those of Mark and John—“for a Jewish charge of illegitimacy during the ministry of Jesus or even at a period contemporary with the evangelists”.

However, in the alternative thesis Brown brings in an ingredient of family tradition as perhaps leavening the mixture of several factors—in conformity with his earlier granting that “the family tradition thesis is not impossible”. But such a posture flies in the face of his own puzzlement as to why, if this tradition existed, it “surfaced relatively late and only in two NT writings”.<sup>11</sup> The difficulties in the way are not merely “formidable”: they appear to be insuperable.

All in all, Brown’s stand that Paul is speaking about the reality of Jesus’ birth and not about the manner of his conception is insufficient except for checking the habit of capital being made out of the fact that the mother alone is mentioned. On the commentator’s showing the gap of family evidence, the expression “born of a woman” seems definitely to point in the direction of Jesus having been conceived in the ordinary manner. Only if we took this expression in a vacuum rather than in the context of the full NT situation would we be left in doubt about its negative bearing in the problem whether the doctrine of the virginal conception had a place in the earliest and original Christianity.

A comparative ambiguity in the last resort, accompanying a keen analysis of surface meanings and a rejection of pro-*virginity* readings, is the result in a more recent treatment of the subject. A collaborative assessment of Marian themes by Protestant and Roman Catholic scholars<sup>12</sup> deals with Galatians 4:4-5 along lines somewhat overlapping with Brown. After quoting the text with its ending which Brown has omitted—“so that we might receive adoption as sons”—and after a few introductory remarks the team tells us:

“One may debate whether ‘His Son’ implies pre-existence or not, but in any case Paul is certainly stressing Jesus’ humanity (‘one born of a woman’) and his

relation to Israel ('one born under the Law')

"The phrase, *genemenon ek gynaikos*, 'born of a woman,' is a frequently-used Jewish expression to designate a person's human condition. It reflects 'ādām yēlūd 'iššāh of Job 14:1, 'a human being (that is) born of a woman. .' (cf. Job 15:14; 25:4). The phrase is found in the same sense in the NT, applied to John the Baptist, *en gennētous gynaikēn*, 'among those born of women' (Matt 11:11; Luke 7.28) As a Semitic expression it is further found in Quoran literature from Palestine. Such a description simply stresses the human condition of Jesus. Thus no convincing argument for Paul's awareness of the virginal conception can be drawn from this phrase—nor from Paul's use of *genomenon (ginesthai)* instead of *gennemenon (gennan...)*, nor from Paul's omission here of any mention of a father. (The implication that Paul should have said 'begotten of a man' is unfounded since there is no evidence that such an idiom existed as a ready alternative to *yēlūd 'iššāh*.) Seemingly the apostle was simply making use of a stereotyped literary expression and not attempting to supply detail on *how* the Son became man

"If one were to ask how Paul could write that 'Jesus was born of a woman,' or even that he 'came into being from a woman,' without implying some reference to Mary, one would have to answer that Paul does thus indirectly refer to her. But it is a reference to her simply as mother, in her maternal role of bearing Jesus and bringing him into the world. There is not the slightest hint here that Jesus was her 'first born' (see Luke 2:7) or that she was a virgin. Paul simply does not mention the virginal conception, and there is no reason to think that he knew of it. On the other hand, a christological affirmation such as Paul makes here is not at all incompatible with the christology of other and later NT writers who maintain the virginal conception.

"How unimportant the phrase 'born of a woman' really was for Paul may be shown by the fact that, of the three things asserted about Jesus in v. 4 (Son, born of a woman, born under the Law), only the first and third are taken up in the parallel description of Christians in v. 5 (he redeemed those *under the law*; he brought it about that we receive adoptive sonship)."

The consensus of the Catholic and Protestant scholars involved in the discussion is: Paul betrays no knowledge of the virginal conception, but the words "born of a woman" are so neutral that they cannot be posed in opposition to anyone's statement of such a conception. The flaw in the consensus is that if Paul attaches little or no importance to these words there was for him nothing of note in the birth of Jesus and they carry the suggestion of the birth being quite ordinary, a product of two human parents. Again, the inference could be that in Paul's time—the time of Christianity at its earliest and in its original form—the virginal-conception doctrine was non-existent.

Evidently, to arrive at the correct conclusion in the controversy we must explore the exact meaning of those four words of Paul's. Let us see whether we

can reach that meaning from some remarks of that well-known British scholar and religious popularizer, William Barclay. Apropos of the sixth and seventh lines of the Apostles' Creed—

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,  
Born of the Virgin Mary,

he<sup>13</sup> writes on Paul and the “Virgin Birth”:

“There is no mention of it either in Paul’s letters or in his sermons as related in Acts. It is sometimes claimed that Galatians 4:4-5 where Paul speaks of Jesus as being *born of a woman*, born under the law, is a reference to the Virgin Birth. But *born of a woman* is the standard description of an ordinary man born in the usual way. ‘Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble’ (Job 14:1). ‘How can he that is born of woman be clean?’ (Job 25:4). Certainly the phrase ‘born of a woman’ has nothing to do with the Virgin Birth. That Paul does not speak of the Virgin Birth is no proof that he did not know of it and believe in it; but it quite certainly is proof that he did not set either the doctrine or the belief in it in the forefront of his gospel, nor did he regard knowledge of it and belief in it as in any way essential to salvation.”

Barclay’s delineation of Paul’s attitude towards “the doctrine or the belief” is accurate from the evidence to be gleaned from that apostle. But one is at a loss what to make of the rest of Barclay’s exposition. At its face-value his statement that the Pauline phrase “is the standard description of an ordinary man born in the usual way” is in stark contradiction to the later assertion that Paul’s silence on the Virgin Birth does not prove lack of knowledge of it and belief in it on his part. Surely, “the usual way” for “an ordinary man” to be “born” is from the cohabitation of two human beings. Barclay would seem to have a different phenomenon in mind. He must mean simply the emergence of a child from a womb into earth-life, so that Jesus was like any other man when he took birth. Then the mode of being born shared by him with the whole race provides no indication of a Virgin Birth, but neither does it negate such a nativity. The context of the phrase “born of a woman” does not at all raise the issue of our answering “Yes” or “No” about it; this appears to be Barclay’s point. Although his “ordinary” and “usual” are suggestive of a different view, he is fundamentally at one with the thinkers we have quoted, except that while they indicated a possible pristine Christianity without the doctrine in question he lets us suppose its presence in a very minor key.

Barclay is open to criticism on two scores. First, is it reasonable to think that so out-of-the-common, so miracle-lit a doctrine would remain in the background? Faith in it may not be necessary to salvation: even now only the ordinary magisterium has declared it infallible, it has not been universally and consistently proposed by the Church as an intrinsic constituent of divine



moment of his conception, cf. Leviticus 15:19f, and birth, cf. Lev 12:2f, since he is born of woman, Job 14:1, cf. Psalms 51:5. But this ritual uncleanness involves a corresponding moral weakness, a tendency to sin, and Christian interpretation has seen in this passage at least an allusion to what was later recognised as ‘original sin’ passed on from parent to child. Cf. Romans 5:12+.” We may infer, from the comment as well as from the passage, that “Man, born of woman” implies human beings in their natural process of birth and must involve for Paul both physical uncleanness and moral frailty, a normal unredeemed state of original sin in which human beings are born from the usual cohabitation of two partners. The phrase, in its total significance, cannot admit any shade related to a sexless virginal conception—and it was coined such obviously because there never was a question of so uncommon a mode of birth.

Paul has employed a turn of speech which before him had no application outside of common human nativity due to sex-contact and which was shot through and through with a sense incapable of including anything else. Even after him it was never applied otherwise in scripture, as is shown from Brown’s references<sup>19</sup> to the Gospels: “See Matthew 11:11 and Luke 7.28: Among those *born* (begotten) *of women* none is greater than John the Baptist.” John the Baptist had a birth by two human beings cohabiting. Thus the same Evangelists who posit the virginal conception happen to reinforce—and that too in a declaration by Jesus himself—Paul’s implication of mortal men entering the world by the natural birth-process. Here is a fixed form of words which had an unequivocal drift and on no occasion gave room for the nuance “born of a virgin”.

It suggested the very absence that we can discern of an extraordinary nativity in some of Paul’s other proclamations about Jesus. Romans 8.3 runs in the *Jerusalem Bible*: “God dealt with sin by sending his own Son in a body as physical as any sinful body, and in that body condemned sin”<sup>20</sup> At the third occurrence of the word “body” we are pointed to a note “Lit ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh, and in that flesh...’ ”<sup>21</sup> It should be plain that there could be no real condemnation of universal sin in a body by Jesus’ self-sacrifice unless the body he had taken were built in the same way as all “sinful flesh”, even though he himself committed no sin. This posture of salvific action is underlined in the note preceding the one we have quoted: “Christ alone, who by his death destroyed our unspiritual nature (lit. ‘flesh’) in his own person, could destroy sin whose domain the ‘flesh’ was. Man formerly carnal is now, through union with Christ, spiritual.”<sup>22</sup> The identical posture is brought home to us in 2 Corinthians 5.21: “For our sake God made the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God.”<sup>23</sup> At the word “sin” we are sent to the note. “By a kind of legal fiction God identified Jesus with sin so that he might bear the curse incurred by sin, Galatians 3 13, Romans 8:3.”<sup>24</sup>

To sum up Paul’s “born of a woman”, viewed in the right perspective of



Biblical usage and perceived with its true implications in the Pauline theology, rules out the idea of the virginal conception and proves the original apostolic Christianity to have had no link with it.

K. D. SETHNA

*Notes and References*

- 1 *The Birth of the Messiah* A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives of Matthew and Luke (Garden City, New York Image Books, A Division of Doubleday & Company, Inc , 1979), pp 518-19
- 2 *Ibid* , p 521
- 3 *Ibid* , p 525
- 4 *Ibid* , p 526
- 5 *Ibid* , p 527
- 6 *Ibid* , p 534
- 7 *Ibid* , p 527
- 8 *Ibid*
- 9 *Ibid* , p 537
- 10 *Ibid* , p 541
- 11 *Ibid* , p 525
- 12 *Mary in the New Testament*, edited by Raymond E Brown, Karl P Donfried, Joseph A Fitzmeyer and John Reumann (Bangalore Theological Publications in India, 1981 Originally published in London by Cassell Ltd , 1978), pp 42-44
- 13 *The Plain Man Looks at the Apostles' Creed* (Glasgow Collins, Fount Paperbooks, 1979), p 77
- 14 *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1964), p 1502, col 2
- 15 *The Jerusalem Bible* (London Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966), The Old Testament, p 743
- 16 *Ibid* , p 745
- 17 *Ibid* , p 756
- 18 *Ibid* , p 743, col 2, n c
- 19 *The Birth of the Messiah*, p 519, fn 5a
- 20 *The Jerusalem Bible*, The New Testament, p 278
- 21 *Ibid* , p 279, col 2, n d
- 22 *Ibid* , n c
- 23 *Ibid* , p 314
- 24 *Ibid* , p 315, col 2, n h Galatians 3 13 to which, along with Romans 8 3, reference is made, reads "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by being cursed for our sake, since scripture says *Cursed be everyone who is hanged on a tree* [Deuteronomy 21 23]" (*The Jerusalem Bible*, pp 324-25)

## THE ROLE OF CREATIVE VISION IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

CULTURE is primarily a system of vision, values and ideals. I have discussed briefly in my earlier article the pragmatic importance of these “soft” cultural factors in human development. This article examines the role of creative vision in human development in the light of Indian insights and modern thought.

### “Vision” in Modern Pragmatic Thought

One of the interesting developments in the latest pragmatic thought of the West is the growing recognition of the importance of “Vision” for long-term corporate viability and effectiveness. This is now recognised even in the fortress of hard-core and result-oriented pragmatism, business and industrial management. This is in direct contrast to the earlier pragmatic thought of the West which viewed the visionary as an impractical dreamer. Some of the latest research investigations on business leadership have found that one of the common traits of all highly successful business leaders is the capacity for a clear vision of the future. The authors of a famous book on management quote a clip from “Fortune” magazine.

“Executive recruiters, asked what qualities their client companies are seeking in a candidate for a top job, report that they are hearing our old friend ‘charisma’ more than they used to. ‘Vision’ also seems in increasing demand: while the head-hunters aren’t sure precisely what the term means, they sense that it has to do with new and much sought-after skills in motivating people.”<sup>1</sup>

But what is exactly the meaning given to the term ‘Vision’ by modern management-professionals? The authors explain further

“What do we mean by Vision? Essentially a vision is a mental journey from the known to the unknown, creating the future from a montage of current facts, hopes, dreams, dangers and opportunities. Just as the mental journeys of Thomas Jefferson and Karl Marx guided nations such journeys can dictate the success of business, and just as nations must adapt their original vision to changing conditions, so must corporate leaders mould their vision to keep pace with a rapidly evolving world.”<sup>2</sup>

The same authors who are the founders of a top-notch management consultancy firm in America declare categorically that “Vision determines Success and Failure” and conclude.

“Executives with clear vision invent excellent futures for their firms: those who lack it set their companies adrift in dangerous waters.”<sup>3</sup>

And the visionary executive has a strong belief in the efficacy of philosophy and values

“The visionary executive frequently talks about his philosophy, the corporate direction and values he thinks will keep the company successful. The non-visionary executive never talks about philosophy and in fact does not appear to have one. ‘I’m too busy to fool around with abstractions and fantasies,’ he says.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus the “soft” factors—life, philosophy, vision and values—have a “hard” pragmatic force. So the modern pragmatic mind is beginning to realise the truth which the Mother expresses with a sublime simplicity: “To be practical, you must have a very clear vision of the goal, of where you are going.”<sup>5</sup>

### The Creative Potential of Vision: Indian Insights

But the pragmatic mind of the West is not interested in any further investigation of the deeper truth and law behind this creative power of visions. It has found by an empirical and scientific investigation of the practical experiences of successful and pragmatic men that “Vision works”. But it is not interested in the why and how of the phenomenon. The Indian mind is not satisfied with this pragmatic truth. It is more deeply scientific than the pragmatic mind of the West. It wants to know why and how vision works or what are the spiritual and psychological truths which makes the vision creative.

Such an enquiry may not have immediate pragmatic results. But in the long term it may have an immense pragmatic utility for the individual and the collectivity. For, once the deeper truth and law and process of a phenomenon are fully understood, they open the possibility for evolving a discipline by which we can gain conscious control and mastery over the process. And for the collectivity it can help the top decision-makers in government and administration to choose the right type of vision, with the highest creative potential, for the nation or the group. Here comes the importance of Sri Aurobindo’s insights in understanding the deeper truths of creative visions.

Let us begin from the basics. What is a vision? Vision is creative dreaming; it is, in the human mind, thought working through imagination to grasp at a future possibility. Creative visioning requires the capacity for sustained, coherent and conscious dreaming, which means to visualise the future, goal, aim, and the ideal and the path to realise it in the clearest possible terms.

According to the Indian spiritual tradition, the entire world is a dream of God, not in the sense of its unreality, but in the sense of it being a creative idea in the consciousness of the divine Self, Spirit or God, His divine vision materialised in force and energy. But this creative idea of God is not a mental idea; it is a supramental spiritual idea in the creative consciousness of the spirit—what Sri Aurobindo calls a Real-idea which is a pregnant vibration of the consciousness-force of the Spirit and in which knowledge and will, conception, execution and realisation are a single indivisible movement. It is this spiritual idea which

determines the deepest truth, law, purpose and destiny of each individual existence in the universe—each being, species, group, object, phenomenon or activity—and governs its evolution according to its truth and law. We can say that this spiritual idea is God's vision and will in each individual thing in the universe, governing its evolution according to the truth of its being and the inherent and natural law of its becoming.

The creative power and effectiveness of a human vision or idea is in proportion to the extent to which it faithfully reflects, participates in or identifies with God's creative vision. Since human mental consciousness is a limited and partial expression of the creative consciousness of the spirit, even the mental idea or vision is not entirely an abstraction but has a force of effectuation inherent in it. But, in the human mind, knowledge and will or the powers of conception and execution are not in perfect unity and harmony as in the creative consciousness of the Divine. So the creative power of a human idea or vision is very limited in comparison with that of the supramental consciousness of the spirit. But still the mental idea and vision also has a creative force and its effective power depends on the extent to which it reflects the Real-idea of the spirit. In general we may say that the creative power of an idea or vision depends on the depth and comprehensiveness of the truth perceived or realised behind the idea and expressed through the idea. The deeper and more comprehensive the truth that is perceived, seen or realised, the greater and higher the nature of the creative force realised.

The mental idea can be used as a means to realise the spiritual truth behind the idea. By a process of concentrated dwelling of the thought and will on the idea we can get behind the idea into the spiritual truth which gives birth to it in the mind. This is the principle of the traditional Indian method of meditation taught by ancient masters of Yoga like Patanjali. This is the meaning of the Sanskrit word Tapas, it is the method by which the human consciousness can rise beyond mind into the spiritual consciousness; it is also the method by which the Divine unrolls the world in His consciousness. The work of the visionary, thinker, prophet and sage is to discover the highest truth of life, nature and the world by Tapas and release the creative force into the world through the inspired Idea and the Word.

This brings us to the subject of different kinds of vision. Some of them embrace the whole of life and existence, others are sectoral visions covering only an aspect of life or a group or a nation. Vision may originate from different levels of human consciousness—physical, vital, mental and spiritual. Visions of great men of action in economics, society and politics are mostly sectoral visions of the pragmatic vital mind. Most of the successful leaders in these fields are either consciously or subconsciously in tune with the truth and law and rhythm of the vital forces of Nature. This gives them a "gut-feeling" into the gestalt of their specific field of action. The vision of intellectual thinkers and philosophers

proceeds from the thinking mind. The vision of a sage or spiritual man proceeds from the spiritual consciousness. This nature of the source of origination is another factor which determines the creative power of a vision. The spiritual vision of a sage has the highest creative power because it more or less participates in the creative vision of God and releases a spiritual force which, as Sri Aurobindo points out, “. . . not only creates the future but creates the material for the future. It is not limited to the existing materials either in their nature or in their quantity. It can transform bad material into good material, insufficient means into abundant means.”<sup>6</sup>

So all visions are not creative or equally creative. All fanciful dreamings are not creative visions. To be creative, a conception must be clear and coherent, based on a deep insight into the truth and law and nature and destiny of things. Every great creative vision of an ideal which is in harmony with the truth and law and destiny of things inevitably realises itself. As Sri Aurobindo points out: “The ideal creates the means of attaining the ideal, if it is itself true and rooted in the destiny of the race.”<sup>7</sup> If, along with this, the vision or ideal is an integral part of a greater global vision of life seen, realised and projected from a spiritual consciousness, it has an enduring creative power which can make and remake a nation. Whenever such a spiritual vision is awakened and activated in the consciousness and life of a nation, it will be followed by a great national renaissance and create a new era of all-round progress and prosperity for the nation.

The spiritual vision of our ancient Vedic Rishis, the great founders of Indian civilisation, and the new greater spiritual vision of the future of India and humanity given by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—which is in fact a continuation and extension of the spiritual vision and work of the Vedic Rishis—have a tremendous creative power. If this spiritual vision of our sages can be awakened and implanted in the collective consciousness of our nation and made the foundation of national development, it can remake not only India but, through a spiritually awakened India, the whole world and herald a new age for mankind.

M S SRINIVASAN

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## FOCUS ON REALITIES AND POSITIVE CONCLUSIONS

WHEN a Sadhak is blamed by fellow-Ashramites, he should not dismiss this condemnation like the croaking of frogs but take it as the 'grace-sent' test of equality coming directly from the Mother. If a Sadhak is puffed up by the praises of fellow-Ashramites, he should become allergic to this rather than absorbing the fat of flattery that may cause cholesterol in the spiritual constitution and block the arteries that circulate love pumped by the spiritual heart. Becoming immune to the flatteries is a necessary prerequisite in Yoga. Praises from fellow-Ashramites too must be regarded as tests coming from the Mother evaluating our indifference to the food of the ego. Gratitude for criticism and detachment from praise are a road to happiness in the spiritual life.

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It is because Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have themselves been on earth that the perils of the deep on the way to the Eternal have been cleared. This becomes much more applicable to those Sadhaks and devotees who have come in physical contact with the Mother. It is so because in all of them She especially had placed Herself in their hearts permanently. This "placement" of Hers which is 'Sri Aurobindo-filled', has been termed by them as "emanation". I describe this "placement" as 'Sri Aurobindo-filled' because Sri Aurobindo is eternally present in the Mother's heart. Since this emanation has been issued from Her physical embodiment, it may be described as Her subtle-physical presence within ourselves. The perils of the deep are out of the picture now that the *Supreme Constants* of *male* and *female* have been integrated in our heart as the united eternal in the form of the Mother. Sri Aurobindo becomes multitudinous through the Mother and our biggest boon is that the Mother contains and projects Sri Aurobindo from our heart. For reaching the Eternal the *access point* is the heart

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Sincerity is an important prerequisite of the Integral Yoga, but to be sincere is not enough. Sincerity has to translate itself into performance. More often than not consistency between sincerity and performance is lacking. Sincerity is not a 'summing-up' of bonafide intentions. We may be very sincere in our intentions but fail to execute them in action. The question then arises as to why this is the case.

There does not seem to be any other logical explanation than one. It is because sincerity and performance are linked with will-power that the problem of inconsistency between the two arises. Strong will-power is a natural or Karmic

gift. People with a strong will can easily match performance with sincerity. But what is the solution for those who are sincere but helpless because their will is blocked in the mind or stifled in the vital being? For them a sincere surrender to the Mother's Divine Will is the only important factor, because by doing so they share Her Will-Power. Lack of will-power can create a vital mess; sincerity would remain static and stationed in one corner.

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The mind as a representative of the psychic being, with the help of the vital, and if possible with the help of the body, has to make co-ordinated moves to secure the release of the psychic being which is held captive by the ego—this may be the first stage of the Integral Yoga but need not be because first stages are not the same for every Sadhak

Mind, vital and body unitedly have to come out with categorical statements: "We are not egos", "We do not live for ego", "We refuse to be used by the egos", "Our true and highest self is the psychic being", "We will give the right dominant position to the psychic being, in each one of us three", "We will drive out the imperialist ego, which like a traitor sells us out to the beings of the mental and vital worlds who use us and live in us to our spiritual detriment." Such statements, regularly repeated, may be useful.

Attraction to ego is very great. It is great because during the course of evolution, when ego was the helper, our forefathers were united with ego in habitual wedlock. That reality still has a hold on us from the Subconscient

From the point of view of the Integral Yoga, wedlock with the ego is a forced one and we must divorce this ego at the earliest. However, we find it difficult to do so because we are still in love with it.

Ego as a helper in the past has received innumerable glorifications by the processes of history and so it persists in innumerable outfits—each outfit having its many offshoots. Ego's continuity is now complex.

What needs to be dissolved is the central ego. If that is done its emanations will die a natural death. Emanations of ego cannot have any independent play.

To put it humorously, we must persuade ego to develop a strong aspiration for Nirvana so that it opts for its own dissolution into nothingness!

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There is another angle to the study of and approach to the 'ego'.

To keep ego in one corner and keep it calm and quiet in order that it may not react to everything that displeases it, requires overcoming its demands. To stop the storms of the ego coming in full force on to the surface from its complicated depths needs consistent efforts and a cautiousness that is always

alert. If this mastery of the ego is pursued from the stage of studentship and if the student is an aspirant for the spiritual life, it can become a basis for the smooth transition from studentship to Sadhahood.

However, when one commences the spiritual life or sadhana, it goes without saying that ego has to be conquered and surrendered to the Mother. Mastering of ego in a certain sense is an acceptance of ego's existence kept under one's thumb in one corner. Mastering of ego then would mean coping with its symptoms but not truly dealing with it. With a little loosening of our hold on the ego, the subconscious strengths can put it right in front of us if we are caught unguarded.

In the Integral Yoga the ego must cease to exist; but there is another side to the illusion of the ego that has gained reality by our consent. Ego's origin is from the Divine Mother, the supreme creatrix. She created this illusion in order to pave the way for the psychic being to take over. For this reason "ego" was the helper from very ancient times and was a formative force that aided humanity to evolve by creating individualities from the stuff of ignorance. For ages and ages the soul has evolved by passing through the experiences of the ignorance which actually were ego-experiences. True, the soul evolved slowly through the ego-Ignorance experiences, but then the soul was not yet ready to embark on spiritual endeavours and adventures.

By the power of detachment our ego may now be offered to the Mother with the aspiration that it be transformed from its present continuity as a perverse reflection of the psychic being to a state of Truth-Light. As Truth-Light it will blend with the psychic being and lose its identity. This process of ego-transforming into Truth-Light may begin the destined ultimate transformation of the ego-centred life-force into the light-centred life-force.

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When the soul came into existence by its seeming separation from Sri Aurobindo, it was specifically formed raw to begin its journey in matter and evolve until it could bring *Him* into matter. The soul, subjected to innumerable births, grows in continuation to and in consequence of its past lives, events and times. Using ego as the medium, these Karmic experiences sharpen, chisel, sculpture the basic soul into the psychic being. However, ego's rule is now over. Either it vanishes into nothingness or consents to be transformed into its origin—the *Truth-Light*.

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The Ashram is one family and so the life lived within the Ashram is a family life. In this sense every Sadhak is a part of the Ashram's domestic career. The



domestic career brings a variety of pressures and confrontations. Because the Ashram is a large family, pressures and confrontations are great and so provide special subtle struggles valuable for Karma Yoga in the Ashram. To sustain these pressures and transform them into powerful aids to Karma Yoga, we have to proceed into Sri Aurobindo's truth by peacefully opening to the Mother within. Our contact with our Divine Parents must proceed uninterrupted irrespective of conditions constantly emerging out of the complexities of Ashram life. To fulfil the precious Karma Yoga of the Ashram, when we attend to our Ashram Family duties, and our obligations to the Ashram life as a whole, inward concentration on the Mother is a must. We breathe the Mother all the time when we sincerely attend to the Ashram's domestic duties.

Large spiritual victories emerge from the small battles fought in the daily domestic life of the Ashram. The details of this life may appear as routine occurrences but they offer opportunities to perfect ourselves because the whole process demands surrender of our ego to Him and Her.

The one-family aspect of the Ashram makes available extraordinary circumstances for the inmates to grow out of human frivolities into the Life Divine.

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To each Sadhak of the Integral Yoga, his body is Sri Aurobindo's gift to his soul. This purposeful gift represents a directive that the soul may work and live for Sri Aurobindo on earth. In order that the soul may become a wonderful instrument for Sri Aurobindo's reign on earth this package of human body has come to the human soul.

Our souls came into manifestation by separation from Sri Aurobindo and being wedded with matter. Sri Aurobindo too has extended Himself from eternity and focused on earth. He has come on earth so that we may return to Him in matter. The body is the matter in which we live and He is seated in our hearts. We can return to Him by uniting with Him in the Yogic heart of our body. We should not and must not lose sight of the reality that the gift of the body is a formation by the Mother. Let us therefore offer wonderful victory to Sri Aurobindo by realising His blissful presence in the Yogic heart of our body.

JAGAT KAPADIA

## SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

*(Continued from the issue of March 1996)*

A QUESTION may be raised at a certain point. what was there for Sri Aurobindo to realise further? He had already achieved the major realisations: the Silent Mind, the Nirvanic Consciousness, the Consciousness of the Nirguna Brahman and the Saguna or the Dynamic Vasudeva, Consciousness of the Supreme Will when he was in the Alipore Jail. He also got to know the several planes of Existence leading to the Vijnana or Supermind his yoga in Chandernagore continued in this line of opening up higher and higher levels of consciousness with their characteristic powers and personalities. Complete withdrawal from the scene of the hectic political activity and retirement in the comparative solitude of Pondicherry made it possible for him to intensify his tapasya, his one-pointed askesis, and sail the uncharted seas of the Spirit. His studies in the Veda under interesting circumstances that will be described later confirmed the validity of his experiences and gave him clues for the identification of certain deities that he had encountered in meditation earlier. At each experience he kept asking himself, "What after all this experience? What next?" and kept a most rational outlook and inlook, amidst the many extraordinary spiritual experiences that were coming to him.

A letter of his during this period (12-7-1911) gives an indication of the developments:

"I need some place of refuge in which I can complete my Yoga unassailed and build up other souls around me. It seems to me that Pondicherry is the place appointed by those who are Beyond, but you know how much effort is needed to establish the thing that is purposed upon the material plane . . .

"I am developing the necessary powers for bringing down the spiritual on the material plane, and I am now able to put myself into men and change them, removing the darkness and bringing light, giving them a new heart and a new mind. This I can do with great swiftness and completeness with those who are near me, but I have also succeeded with men hundreds of miles away. I have also been given the power to read men's characters and hearts, even their thoughts, but this power is not yet absolutely complete, nor can I use it always and in all cases. The power of guiding action by the mere exercise of it is also developing, but it is not so powerful as yet as the other. My communication with the other world is yet of a troubled character, though I am certainly in communication with some very great powers. But of all these things I will write more when the final obstacles in my way are cleared from the path.

"What I perceive most clearly, is that the principal object of my Yoga is to remove absolutely and entirely every possible source of error and ineffectiveness, of error in order that the Truth I shall eventually show to men may be

perfect, and of ineffectiveness in order that the work of changing the world, so far as I have to assist it, may be entirely victorious and irresistible. It is for this reason that I have been going through so long a discipline and that the more brilliant and mighty results of Yoga have been so long withheld. I have been kept busy laying down the foundation, a work severe and painful. It is only now that the edifice is beginning to rise upon the sure and perfect foundation that has been laid.”<sup>1</sup>

Sri Aurobindo rarely moved out of his residence. It is said that he would pace within the house for two to three hours every day—a habit he kept up all his life. He once observed that walking was his favourite asana. He used to receive friends in the evening. Subramania Bharati and Srinivasachari were his regular visitors. On certain days he would take up the hymns of the Rig Veda and explain them. Bharati was an enthusiastic student and these sessions inspired him to write and sing in his own mother-tongue, Tamil, the glories of the Veda. Nolini Kanta Gupta, one of those who participated in these sittings, describes them: “Sri Aurobindo came and took his seat at the table and we sat around Subramania Bharati, the Tamil poet, and myself were the two who showed the keenest interest. Sri Aurobindo would take up a hymn from the Rig Veda, read it aloud once, explain the meaning of every line and phrase and finally give a full translation. I used to take notes. There were many words in the Rig Veda whose derivation is doubtful and open to difference of opinion. In such cases, Sri Aurobindo used to say that the particular meaning he gave was only provisional and that the matter could be finally decided only after considering it in all the contexts in which the word occurred. His own method of interpreting the Rig Veda was this: on reading the context he found its true meaning by direct intuitive vision through an inner concentration in the first instance, and then he would give it an external verification in the light of reason, making the necessary changes accordingly.”<sup>2</sup>

Reports from A. B. Purani follow:

“Once it seemed likely that the French Government might yield to the pressure of the British Government in the matter of handing over the political refugees. This was a very crucial time for all of them. Subramanya Bharati got very excited and disturbed over the news as was usual with him. One day he came all excited and agitated and asked Sri Aurobindo what he proposed to do in case the French government would not shield them. Bharati asked, ‘Do you not prefer to go out of India in that case? What is your view?’ Sri Aurobindo turned his back to him and sat quietly for a few minutes. He then turned to Bharati and said, ‘Mr. Bharati, I am not going to budge an inch from Pondicherry. I know nothing will happen to me. As for yourself you can do what you like.’ After that he sat silent in his chair. Bharati and others dropped the idea of going either to Djibuti or Indochina or Tripoli, which was in their minds.

In April 1913 Sri Aurobindo changed his residence from St. Louis Street to

Mission Street. The rent of the house was Rs. 15 per month. The reason of the change was economic stress

15 August was celebrated in the Mission Street house. Sri Aurobindo was not well on that day, he had fever. But he came out and sat in the verandah and all those who had come passed before him. Moni had composed a Bengali poem which he read. Sri Aurobindo liked it and gave him a garland.

During this year, apparently, Sri Aurobindo translated C. R. Das's *Sagar Sangit* into English verse. For this the latter sent Rs. 1000. V. Ramaswamy (Va-Ra) went back to Tanjore during the year.

In October 1913 Sri Aurobindo moved to 41 (afterwards 10), Rue François Martin. This house was better lighted and ventilated. Upto this point there had been no furniture worth the name, no bedding, only mats with pillows; only two chairs one of which Sri Aurobindo used while writing and another outside his room which he used while receiving someone or giving an interview. Only one writing table and one camp-cot were there. The canvas of the camp-cot had been torn on one side. So Sri Aurobindo used to lie down carefully on the untorn side and sleep! In 1914 this house became the office of the *Arya*. Sri Aurobindo remained here up to 1922.”<sup>3</sup>

*(To be continued)*

NILIMA DAS

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## PARU

I CAME to know Paru in 1967, when six of us used to meet Kireet regularly for the study of *The Life Divine*. I found her a quiet, unassuming, yet keenly interested member of the group.

Then I came in contact with her as she worked with Kireet. But most recently, during the last five years, my contact with her grew on a different basis as I took to her some visitor-friends who wished to know about our Centre of Education and its aim. She gave the impression of a confident navigator, aware of the raging environment of the world around with the possibility of its adverse influences as well as of the Mother's dream of a nucleus of the New World She wished to prepare here. There was a constant concern and alertness to adhere to the Mother's guidance

I remember our meeting with her before leaving for the U.S.A. in 1990. We asked her if anything was needed for our Centre of Education by way of funds, technical equipment or books, etc. She seemed open to all that is beautiful in modern progress, but was cautious lest we should lose the gains of the Mother's work by external distractions. She was weary of too many cultural activities which took away a great deal of time from studies and distracted the students from concentrating on the true aim of education.

She consecrated her life to the Mother's call of double duty as a trustee of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and as the registrar of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education—not an easy task at all when everyone could treat her as their equal and question her decisions in administrative work with their many ideas, opinions and mental judgements

In my view, she was indeed a guardian of the Mother's trust, a faithful worker and a beautiful person with goodwill towards all, striving for harmony. In many subtle ways, she radiated the Mother's teaching in action.

The Mother in her great compassion called back her valiant warrior to rest in her lap—a call she silently and smilingly accepted without undergoing medical tortures.

Her noble soul rests in peace and recovers the strength to replunge in this battle for the Mother's Victory.

KAILAS J.

## MUSINGS ON *PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS*

(Continued from the issue of March 1996)

### *Shining Path*

SOME of us feel so much like strangers in the world. Even when we have a loving family, we feel like orphans—as if we belonged nowhere and nothing belonged to us. Forlorn, bewildered and lonely, we walk on the ways of life, seeking support now in this adored person, now in that lofty ideal. Yet all things fail us and we fail everybody. Yet we are by no means insensitive. We love intensely and would gather all the world in our arms and heal all its pains and fulfil all its wants. We would have heavens descend on earth—still we belong neither here nor *there*.

Great is the pain of those evolved beings who are suddenly plunged into this world of falsehood, deceit, aggressive self-promotion and militant self-assertion. Our gentle natures suffer intense agonies and cry out in despair, “Why is it so? Why am I here? Why does nothing make sense to me and why don’t I feel a lasting affinity with any person or any cause? Why is it that no earthly ideal fulfils me?”

When the high noons of blazing actions and passions are done with, then come ripe evenings of wisdom and calm. We begin to discover the cause of the anomalies of our life. Life makes some sense. We realise that as when transporting a priceless diamond a loving jeweller wraps it up in many soft satin bags one over another and then puts it in a strong iron box to save it from damage and effectively hides its effulgence to ward off greedy robbers—likewise the Divine Jeweller has wrapped and swathed in wrappings of ignorance and half-knowledge our invaluable diamond soul-child to transport or transplant it into this world of Matter, across the threshold of human birth, to save it from any sudden premature awakening, which might defeat the purpose of its birth and descent into the Creation.

Even when the Divine Mother manifests herself in this world of ignorance she wraps herself in some dense light-clothes which to us, who live in darkness, seem a robe of light, yet in comparison to the full Divine Sun-Potencies, are shades of darkness.

This truth is forcefully borne out by the Mother’s *prayer* of October 7, 1913.

This return after an absence of three months to the house which is consecrated to Thee, O Lord, has been the occasion of two experiences. The first is that in my outer being, my surface consciousness, I no longer have the least feeling of being in my own home and the owner of anything there. I am a stranger in a strange land, much more of a stranger here than

in the open countryside among the trees, and I smile, now that I have learnt what I did not know, I smile at the idea of having felt myself "mistress of the house", an idea I had before my departure; it was necessary for all pride to be broken, crushed, trampled down definitively so that I could at last understand, see and feel things as they are. I used to offer to Thee this dwelling, O Lord, as though it was possible that I should possess something and consequently be able to make an offering of it to Thee. All is Thine, O Lord, it is Thou who placest all things at our disposal; but how blind we are when we imagine that we can be owners of any one of these! I am a visitor here as elsewhere, as everywhere, Thy messenger and Thy servant upon earth, a stranger among men, and yet the very soul of their life, the love of their heart ...

What is there in this world which we can call ours? What is there which we can own? All belongs to the Lord, all is given by him. The feeling of ownership, the pride of acquisitions are a childish mirage. One breath of the Lord can blow away our houses of cards. All our attainments, our inner and outer possessions, are mere gifts of time and if to pamper obstinate children a mother allows them to play with mud pies, it is a temporary concession, a postponement of their higher destiny

The moment we realise that we are nothing, that we can do nothing, that nothing belongs to us, that we are beggars bereft of possibilities, then at that moment our *true being* takes birth. This total annihilation of our ego is definitely a Grace of the Lord. No human achievement can satisfy the soul. The annulment of ego is the triumph of the Lord in us. When we acquire that state our whole outlook changes, the very ideas of achievements and acquisitions seem ridiculous, for we are nothing, we have nothing. Only after realising this truth we earn the privilege of being the Lord's *servant*

Then strange and mysterious powers surround us. The whole ambience changes. The Mother writes,

Secondly, the whole atmosphere of the house is charged with a religious solemnity; one immediately goes down into the depths; the meditations here are more in-gathered and serious; dispersion vanishes to give place to concentration, and I feel this concentration literally descending from my head and entering into my heart; and the heart seems to attain a depth more profound than the head. It is as though for three months I have been loving with my head and that now I were beginning to love with my heart; and this brings me an incomparable solemnity and sweetness of feeling

Life takes on mystic hues, we carry around an aroma of spirituality. Our

ambience is filled with the Presence of the Lord. Mind, which organised the *yajña*, retreats and the heart takes over, all becomes Love. Sweet is the feeling of this all-pervasive Love which includes all that is good or bad, high or low, sacred or profane, manifest or non-manifest.

There are new beginnings. The Mother writes,

A new door has opened in my being and an immensity has appeared before me.

I cross the threshold with devotion, feeling hardly worthy yet of entering upon this hidden path, veiled to the sight and as though invisibly luminous within.

All is changed, all is new; the old wrappings have fallen off and the new-born child half-opens its eyes to the shining dawn.

The time comes when the Supreme Jeweller unfolds the diamond, the child-soul.

All becomes "sky and God".

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### *The Waste*

There are realms of supraphysical beauty, peace, light and love, there are symphonies of indescribable splendour whose notes are beyond the range of human ears, there are worlds of angels and gods of which we humans are almost totally ignorant. Except for the rare souls for whom physical boundaries do not exist and who can change their stations of consciousness and existence with the practised ease of a Jonathan Livingston Seagull, most of us are cruelly imprisoned in the cage of senses on a tiny globe covered over with a star-sequined sky, whirling in the immensities of time and space. While a myriad galaxies immense light-years away could have been our next stop, we, like a child's top, whirl round and round rooted to a small area to which we have been wedded by birth, fate and circumstances. Do our frenzied gyrations add anything much to the sum-total of our life? Of little use are the pirouettes and rotations of our physical, emotional and mental beings. They advance one step and fall back two. Thus goes on the caravan of life in the same ruts of existence. The little bumps, uneven surfaces and small heights of the rut give us the illusion of struggle, loss and achievement while nothing really changes. One unexpected blow from our fellow-beings is enough to make us tumble into primitive vital-emotional reactions while our laboriously gathered sainthood slips and falls to the ground. One reason for this sliding back is our subconscious, which is like a movie-camera lens, forever focused on the appearances around us. The senses register



everything that comes within their ordinary range and this voluminous record imprints itself on our cells forever. We carry within ourselves the subtle imprints of all our sensations of previous lives, even of those when we were fishes or animals. All these past and present myriad phenomena which are registered by our subconscious are like a swarm of sand particles which obstructs us from seeing things greater and higher. These wonderful worlds of light, oceans of felicity and divinity, are thus covered from our view.

How frustrating is it to be glued to the memory of a broken wall or a chipped cup when we could have entered the perfect worlds of the Gods, how futile to be disturbed by the memory of a frowning face when we could have chosen to rejoice in the benevolent smile of the Lord, what a howling waste of consciousness is it to pass time in frustrated anger while we could have entered the sunlit chamber of our soul!

On November 25, 1913, the Mother wrote in her diary,

The greatest enemy of a silent contemplation turned towards Thee is surely this constant subconscient registering of the multitude of phenomena with which we come into contact. So long as we are mentally active, our conscious thought veils for us this overactivity of our subconscious receptivity; an entire part of our sensibility, and perhaps not the smallest, acts like a cine-camera without our knowledge and indeed to our detriment. It is only when we silence our active thought, which is relatively easy, that we see this multitude of little subconscious notations surging up from every side and often drowning us under their overwhelming flood. So it happens that, as soon as we attempt to enter the silence of deep contemplation, we are assailed by countless thoughts—if thoughts they could be called—which do not interest us in the least, do not represent for us any active desire, any conscious attachment, but only prove to us our inability to control what may be described as the mechanical receptivity of our subconscient. A considerable labour is needed to silence all these useless noises, to stop this wearisome train of images and to purify one's mind of these thousand little nothings, so obstructing and worthless. And it is so much time uselessly lost; it is a terrible wastage.

And the remedy? In an over-simple way, certain ascetic disciplines recommend solitude and inaction: sheltering one's subconscient from all possible registration, that seems to me a childish remedy, for it leaves the ascetic at the mercy of the first surprise attack, and if one day, confident of being perfectly master of himself, he wants to come back among his fellowmen in order to help them, his subconscient, so long deprived of its activity of reception, will surely indulge it more intensely than ever before, as soon as the least opportunity offers.



This surely is our dismal reality, this the graveyard of most of our upward efforts. What hope is there for us? What should we do to escape the clutches of this millennial nuisance? Are we destined to go round and round remembering things which do not matter to us in the least? Is there no fairy wand which could put to rest this tyrant activity and its debilitating effect on our sadhana? The Mother spells it out,

There is certainly another remedy. What is it? Undoubtedly, one must learn to control one's subconscious just as one controls one's conscious thought. There must be many ways of achieving this. Regular introspection in the Buddhist manner and a methodical analysis of one's dreams—formed almost always from this subconscious registration—are part of the method to be found. But there is surely something more rapidly effective.. .

One sighs at this tall order of things and wishes that sadhana was not such a complicated long-drawn-out affair. But it is our own grim approach to sadhana which makes it tedious. A mother rarely finds the millions of tasks which are involved in raising up a child dreary. She takes a joy in cleaning, washing and bathing her child. She sews with infinite care new garments for her growing child, who soon outgrows them and needs others. Each stage of this growth is a joy for her. Thus also if we were to love ourselves, the recalcitrant subconscious included, and were to take joy in purifying, educating and controlling this part of our being, then it could become a glad offering, a joy-ride towards the high ridges of spirituality. For each of us the Master of our Yoga would have a different way. But if we petition, he is sure to listen to our need for upliftment. We have to, we must, take refuge in the Lord.

The Mother ends the prayer with a trusting call,

O Lord, Eternal Master, Thou shalt be the Teacher, the Inspirer; Thou wilt teach me what should be done, so that after an indispensable application of it to myself, I may make others also benefit from what Thou hast taught me.

With a loving and trustful devotion, I bow to Thee

Thus will we emerge one day in our true being when stars will see us outstrip them, suns will be censors held on the way.

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### *The Dawn*

Early in the morning there is a moment when the sun-gold waits to wash the east.

A dark mantle still covers the earth and a holy hush pervades the atmosphere. Nature watches with bated breath the coming of the sun. This is the hour the yogis and the aspirants treasure as most propitious for invoking the Lord and establishing communion with one's soul. Life is still asleep and humanity has yet to start its never-ending round of activities. A stray wind blows gently like an ethereal hand lifting the dark wraps from the face of the earth.

At such an hour the Mother used to sit in front of an open window to welcome the new day and to make it the harbinger of a new progress and upliftment of consciousness for earth and men. When she began to write these prayers she had ascended almost the greatest heights of spirituality. For herself she needed nothing, for us she aspired, hoped and asked for more and more peace, light and love. The upliftment of this manifest world and divinisation of this humanity was of the utmost concern to her. In the holy hush of such a morn, on November 28, 1913, she wrote:

In this calm concentration which comes before day-break, more than at any other moment, my thought rises to Thee, O Lord of our being, in an ardent prayer

Grant that this day which is about to dawn may bring to the earth and to men a little more of pure light and true peace; may Thy manifestation be more complete and Thy sweet law more widely recognised; may something higher, nobler, more true be revealed to mankind; may a vaster and deeper love spread abroad so that all painful wounds may be healed; and may this first sunbeam dawning upon the earth be the herald of joy and harmony, a symbol of glorious splendour hidden in the essence of life.

Who amongst even the Vedic or the Upanishadic yogis could have aspired so vastly? Our Mother also knew that she was the only hope for the earth and humanity, she was the radiant sword of Truth which alone could annul the Inconscient and secure the destiny of the earth and the divine future of the race. She was the mediatrix between the highest peaks and the lowest gulfs. She was the Goal and the Path. To fulfil this stupendous task she had constantly to widen, deepen and heighten herself, she had to drink every poison of life so that the earth might smile and humans survive. She had constantly to achieve new and greater summits of Consciousness, had to gather greater Love in herself to annul the hate in the heart of humanity, to achieve higher Powers capable of annihilating the dark lords of the vital planes. Conscious of her almost impossible mission she prays to the Lord:

O Divine Master, grant that today may bring to us a completer consecration to Thy Will, a more integral gift of ourselves to Thy work, a more total forgetfulness of self, a greater illumination, a purer love. Grant that in a

communion growing ever deeper, more constant and entire, we may be united always more and more closely to Thee and become Thy servitors worthy of Thee. Remove from us all egoism, root out all petty vanity, greed and obscurity. May we be all ablaze with Thy divine Love; make us Thy torches in the world

A silent hymn of praise rises from my heart like the white smoke of incense of the perfumes of the East.

And in the serenity of a perfect surrender, I bow to Thee in the light of the rising day.

Thus she showered the earth and its creatures with divine blessings and brought divinity into our life and living. Slowly and imperceptibly she raised the earth-consciousness.

Some conscious souls must have felt a great joy on that day, November 28, 1913.

SHYAM KUMARI

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## SORROW THE AWAKENER

It is the hand of Love that strikes the blow,  
 For if the dreamer will not break his dream  
 But in the magic of the twilight glow  
 Pursues the shadows of the things that seem,  
 Then comes great Sorrow with her rude caress  
 And shakes the sleeper into wakefulness.

Not always do we wake. So long we've played  
 With dreams and in their mists our spirits steeped  
 That when the quickening hand on us is laid  
 We deem our visions into life have leaped.  
 We stretch, not break, our dreams, so backward creep  
 Into this death-in-life, this cave of sleep.

J. N. CHUBB

## IF THERE IS PAIN

If there is pain,  
What is the gain, then, O Lord?  
Must we be chained to the grinding wheel?  
Cannot we feel  
Only delight, joy, love, life's ecstasy  
While we are learning to know  
What you want us to know?  
Life cannot be  
This continuous see-saw of pleasure and misery—  
Anger, revulsion, desire. Is affection,  
Are all of these only reflection  
Of the still unregenerate beast we harbor within?  
If twenty angels can dance on the head of a pin,  
Why must I plod this stony uncomfortable path,  
Stumbling, bleeding from real and imagined wounds;  
Afraid of your wrath  
If I forget to say "Thanks" or abjure?  
These terrible gifts are yours?  
Why? Why should I have an attitude  
Of Thanks, of praise, of gratitude  
For the misery you give to me?  
Can I not live in love and laughter and feel free,  
Reach out to all who are a part of me,  
Who dance along my body's paths?  
Must there always be the aftermaths  
Of doubt and fear of loss, of what tomorrow brings,  
Hearing the final toll in every bell that rings?

Who is to say  
Renunciation, abnegation is the only way?

Let me live and love in today,  
Let me joy in the way  
You have made me,  
To know, to feel, to see, each moment an ecstasy!

Oh great Compassionate One, we know that You,  
Having created us all, have created the sweet passions, too.  
Let me delight  
In the joys of sound and sight,  
Let me be free to love only,  
My special loves, and all humanity!

ELIZABETH STILLER

## LOGIC AND BEYOND

THE purpose of this article is to develop a system of philosophy of our own concerning the most fundamental aspect of philosophy, that is, the question of the ultimate reality.

1 We want to develop our system in an analytical way and therefore in a logical way. The reason why we name our article 'Logic and Beyond' is simply that logic, or rather traditional logic, itself proves to be insufficient for the purpose, as we shall see. So we shall necessarily have to go beyond the tenets of traditional logic.

Logic is defined as the science of thought (as expressed in language). The term 'logic' was first introduced by the Stoics who were the disciples of the philosopher Zeno who used to teach in the Stoa Poikilē (Painted Porch) at Athens. The term was derived from the Greek word 'logos' which literally means 'the word'. The traditional logic or the classical logic received its proper form through the teachings of Aristotle.

By 'science of thought' what was meant was the laws that must hold for all thinking, irrespective of what the thinking is about. (For this reason, it is often said that thoughts of things are the things of thought in Logic.) The foundation of logic was laid by Aristotle and it consists of three principles, called the laws of thought:

- (1) A is A (Law of identity)
- (2) A cannot be both B and not-B.  
(Law of non-contradiction)
- (3) A is either B or not-B  
(Law of the excluded middle, *i.e.*, any third or middle possibility between B and not-B is excluded)

It is evident that the laws are framed with a view to the external empirical world.

There is no question as to the veracity of these laws in any empirical field. But, just because of this, should we or can we call the laws the laws of thought? The thinking man, in his thinking, has to go beyond the limits of empiricism. This is because, in the causal-chain of empirical facts, there is no end, *i.e.*, there is no point which is an end-in-itself. In fact, about any empirical fact or phenomenon the question may be asked as to why it is so. If the reason is given in terms of another empirical fact or phenomenon, the same question may be asked about that fact or phenomenon also. So when we want to form a total view about this world or about this very existence we shall have to transcend the norms of the traditional logic. This is why the philosophers of the east and of the west conceived of a transcendent form of logic, which has been called the *bhedābheda nyāya* in the ancient east and the dialectical logic in the west. We now propose to build up a total-view about this very existence in our own way.

Man's quest for truth starts from the moment he begins wondering about what he sees around him in the big outer world, and begins pondering about how this world came into being. We do feel that this very world of our empirical perception may quite have a beginning and may quite have an end. In fact, for any organised body or for any 'composite' that is what always happens. In this connection we may recall the ancient saying of our sages, namely, that this sun and this moon are conceived of by Providence as they were conceived of by Him in earlier times (*suryacandramasau dhātā yathāpūrvam akalpayat*). It may be mentioned here that the modern theory of the expanding universe and its first start from a sudden gigantic explosion (Big Bang) of a point-mass of infinite density and of a possible end through a big crunch in the distant future very much corroborates this ancient view. The theory, of course, keeps silent about the state of affairs before the beginning of this universe and about the probable state of affairs after its end. The theory declares that the point of beginning is a point of mathematical singularity and the likely point of end will also be a point of mathematical singularity. As such, the state of things prior to the beginning of this universe and posterior to its end cannot have any scientific connection with the existing universe. This is quite understandable because 'scientific connection' means empirically discernible cause-and-effect relation. But if we take a deeper and wider view and take science as a search for full truth, then we cannot divest philosophy from it and then science also must face questions on the ultimate realities.

In fact, when we think of the beginning of this universe we immediately feel that it has come out of something, for we are convinced that out of nothing nothing comes (*ex nihilo nihil fit* or *nāsato vidyate bhāvo*). We are equally convinced that into nothing nothing can go (*nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ*). In a word, we are convinced that existence itself, *i e*, pure existence, is eternal. It can have neither a beginning nor an end.

What is the true nature of this existence out of which the universe has come? When we enter into any such query we have to reflect on this universe again. We first get overwhelmed by the vastness or rather the vaster-than-vastness (*mahato-mahīyān*) of observable existence around us and get equally overwhelmed by its atomic and subatomic minuteness (*anoranīyān*). But gradually we are seized by the general rhythm and the law-abiding coherence, technically speaking, the uniformity of Nature. From this uniformity we come to the notion of one single supreme consciousness, one mind, that must have carved out this cognisable universe. That is because the fact that many things exist but they are all under one law can be accepted only when we are ready to accept that the world is the creation of one intelligence.

2. Before we proceed further with our study of the ultimate realities we have to pause for a while and say what we have to say as regards the 'indeterminacy principle' of modern science which holds that the days of uniformity of



Nature are gone. In this connection, we think it should be sufficient to observe that the indeterminacy talked of in the indeterminacy principle lies in the sphere of our reckoning the exact state of Nature and, as such, such indeterminacies are epistemological problems and therefore lie in the realm of phenomenology which involves study of things as they appear to us or to our senses. But it will never mean that the law that visibly governs the universe fails at places.

The indeterminacy principle is a necessary consequence of quantum theory which rests on Planck's discovery in 1900 that light, X-rays and other waves cannot be emitted at an arbitrary rate, but only in packets that he called quanta. Hence any such wave of an amount less than a quantum cannot be emitted. The indeterminacy principle was deduced and propounded in the year 1926 by Werner Heisenberg. The main point is that the fundamental particles with which modern science is now concerned are so small that the position and the velocity of any such particle are getting disturbed (and that in an unpredictable way) by the light or X-rays that are required to be thrown on them for the purpose of any investigation. In fact, it has been found that if the position of the particle is ascertained through some device *via* effect-method, the velocity of the particle becomes unascertainably changed, and *vice-versa*. But unless the position and the velocity of the particle are correctly known at one and the same time, no prediction about any future behaviour of the particle can be made. This is the genesis of the indeterminacy principle. Since the basic purpose of science is to know Nature objectively in a complete way so as to be able to make correct predictions, the matter is, no doubt, of extreme importance in science. But what is still more important is to know that this indeterminacy lies in the sphere of our reckoning the exact state of Nature, and not in the state of Nature itself. (The principle may have a deeper implication in a different sense. Who knows whether it means that the last word can never be said, at least, empirically? Whether such a time is come, nobody will however be able to say, for man will for ever try to improve upon his knowledge in every field including the empirical. Perhaps today's obstacles may be overcome some day.)

As far as this point is concerned, the difficulties may thus be cleared up. The trouble begins when some quantum theorists like Niels Bohr declare that science is concerned only with measurable truths and if a thing is not measurable then there is no sense in saying that it exists. Bohr's understanding in this matter is known as the Copenhagen interpretation. It is precisely in this connection that Einstein, who got the Nobel Prize for his work in quantum theory, said that objective reality stands by itself, independent of human knowledge and man's capabilities for measurements. He said that he does not believe that God plays dice. He felt that some basic ingredients were missing in this theory and one day we would be able to find them. Reference may be made in this connection to the famous days-long exchanges between Bohr and Einstein. Schrodinger, who along with Heisenberg and Dirac reformulated mechanics into what is now

known as quantum mechanics (based on the indeterminacy principle), says that if there is a fifty-fifty chance for a cat in a closed box to be dead or alive, we have to take it as half-dead and half-alive. Like Bertrand Russell we can also say that the cat itself, like the Cheshire cat, will surely grin at this verdict. Anyhow, very recently scientists are feeling that the quantum theory has come to a cross-roads and may take a radically new turn.

Ending our survey of the indeterminacy principle we may say that there is no reason for us to cast any doubt over the uniformity of Nature and our earlier conclusion based on the notion of this uniformity should stand unaffected.

3 We have talked of the one supreme consciousness that must have given formation to or created this universe. But this is not yet monism. Granted that the world is the creation of one single consciousness which is thus the efficient cause (*karana-kārana*) of this world, our next question is as to what is the material cause (*upādāna-kārana*) of this world. Can it not be the case that the world-stuff or matter out of which the world is created or formed is a second independent ultimate reality? If that be the case there would be two ultimate realities, giving rise to a dualism (*dwaitavāda*) involving matter and mind. On this point we want to observe as follows.

Ultimate reality cannot be consciousness on one side and independent matter-stuff on the other. Consciousness by itself cannot act on matter if that matter is independent of the consciousness and extraneous to it. Let us look at ourselves. Our mind by itself cannot act on any external matter. Our mind can act only on our body and that is because the body and the mind constitute one single being. The supreme consciousness also, so we believe, will be able to act on matter-stuff if that matter-stuff and the consciousness are one single being. We shall call this being the supreme being or the supreme self. One may yet insist and say that the ultimate reality may still be two—the supreme conscious being as one reality and extraneous independent matter as a second reality—arguing that the supreme conscious being through its own stuff can act on extraneous matter, as our mind through our body can act on external objects. In this connection we would like to observe that the supreme being through its own stuff would no doubt be able to act on external matter, but that would be only to the extent of producing material changes in it. It would not be able to infuse consciousness into that external matter, which it precisely is doing in the big time-scale. If on the other hand the external matter is also assumed to be possessing consciousness then it would lead to duality or multiplicity of independent ultimate consciousnesses. In that case, uniformity of Nature would hardly remain believable or explainable.

To wit, we do hold that the ultimate reality is one, but this one is dialectical in nature, in the sense that it possesses consciousness and possesses that stuff in it which, under the dictates of the consciousness, can produce this material universe. We may call this reality a two-in-one, if we please, but it is one, not

two, for the two are two parts of the same one and never separable. The stuff of the supreme self through which the supreme self produces this material universe need not be gross matter itself. We do not know what it is in itself except that it can produce or generate matter. For this reason it may be called the cause-matter. In fact it is not the body of the universe, but is its cause-body (*kāraṇa-śarīra*). (It may be mentioned that even science to-day does believe that the basis of gross matter is not gross matter, but something very different from that.) It must be said that we get confirmation of our line of thinking in the Nasadiya Sukta of the Rīg Veda (10/129/3) where it is declared that the sole one who was there covered by a paltry sheath expanded himself by energizing himself (*tucchena avu apihitam yat āsīt tapasastanmahinā ajāyata ekam*). Note that the sheath was imagined to be paltry (*tuccha*) by the ancient rishis and the modern scientist imagines the universe to have originated from a point-mass only. Nevertheless, the one who was covered by the paltry sheath energized himself and expanded. The point-mass is also conceived to be of infinite density and therefore of infinite energy and it expanded and is still expanding.

Spinoza said that the ultimate reality is one. He called it 'Substance' and also called it 'God'. For him the substance or the ultimate reality is something that can both think and have extension in space. So Spinoza also thought of the two aspects of the ultimate one, very much as we have done. However we would like to mention that our ultimate reality does not have any extension in space. An ultimate reality can have extension in space if and only if space is another ultimate reality and so ultimate reality would not be one. We think that space itself is a creation. We consider it to be a creation concomitant with creation of matter expanding in space. Many modern relativistic and quantum cosmologists talk of space as a physical object. We do not want to equate it with physical objects, but would like to think of it as a creation concomitant with creation of physical objects. In the Prashna Upanishad the Rishi, while describing the creation of the sixteen features (*sodasa kalā*) by the Ultimate out of himself, talks of space or sky as one of the features and places it before the different physical objects.

Since for us the ultimate reality is one, our viewpoint is monistic. Monism may be of different kinds depending on the view taken of the nature of the ultimate reality. Since for us the ultimate reality is a conscious being whom we like to call God (*theos*) or Ishwara and since we believe that everything is created by God out of himself, our viewpoint is what is known as pantheism (*sarve-svaravāda*).

It may be mentioned that 'pantheism' is the name given to the philosophy of Spinoza which holds the view that God is totally immanent in the universe (*visvagata*) and everything is (essentially) God. Spinoza has indeed called God transcendent also, but that he did in the sense that God is transcendental to empirical perception. We surely consider God to be transcendent in this sense.

(*anirvacanīya*) but we also consider God to be transcendent in the deeper sense that God, while indwelling and pervading the universe, also transcends the universe (*viśvātīta*). True, Hegel held a view very similar to ours and his philosophy is known as ‘pantheism’ (*sarvadhareśvaravāda*) which means that everything is held by God. Since, however, everything that is held by God is (essentially) God himself, we think ‘pantheism’ will be a better description for our viewpoint. Spinoza’s ‘pantheism’ may be called a ‘pantheism’ of his own special kind.

For Shankara, the ultimate reality was all consciousness and consciousness alone, and one was debarred from calling it a conscious being, for (according to Shankara) it had nothing else in it apart from consciousness. How did he explain creation of matter and the material universe? He explained it or rather explained it away as unreal and as an illusion (*brahma satya jaganmuthyā*). We cannot accept this view. We hold that the universe (*jagat*) is a derivative of the ultimate and eternal reality. A derivative of the real is necessarily real. The creation to us is real, though finite in time. We know how completely Sri Aurobindo has refuted and rejected Shankara’s thesis. We believe, like Sri Aurobindo, that the creation is real with a design and a teleological purpose behind it.

4 However, we shall not proceed further with our reflections on creation and shall not take up the question of the purposive cause (*uddeśya-kāraṇa*) of creation, though the matter is, no doubt, very important, for man’s philosophy of life depends very much on the view he takes of the purpose behind this creation. A discussion of this may be found in the author’s article “Creation and My Inner Feeling” (*Mother India*, Sept-Oct, 1993).

What we want to bring to light before we come to a close is that when we take up the question of the ultimate reality, we have to transgress the limits of ordinary logic. It is evident that the Aristotelian laws of thought comprising the three laws, namely, the law of identity, the law of non-contradiction and the law of the excluded middle, are not competent to deal with questions of the ultimate reality. The ultimate reality is one. But it is that kind of *one* which can become many and yet at the same time remain one. We are led to the notion of unity in multiplicity or unity in diversity. Between creatures and also between creatures and the creator there is difference and non-difference at one and the same time. These are matters beyond the scope of ordinary logic. Our ancient rishis had to conceive of a logic of difference and non-difference (*bhedābheda nyāya*), and in the west, centuries later, Kant had to conceive of a ‘dialectical logic’ which he also called ‘the logic of the truth’. Sri Aurobindo felt the necessity of what he called the logic of infinity. We conclude by drawing attention to the close connection of these outlooks with that which is behind the famous mantra (*śāntipāth*) prefacing the Isha Upanishad:

*pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidam  
pūrṇāt pūrṇamudacyate*

*pūrnasya pūrṇamādāya  
pūrnamevāvaśisyate*

which means.

That is full, this is full,  
from full full derives,  
When full is taken out from full  
It is full that survives.

ASHOK KUMAR RAY

## TWO POEMS

### MY CHOICE

I BUILT a marble castle  
Of platinum was its roof  
It glittered with gold and diamonds,  
Impregnable it stood.  
This would be my home I thought,  
Away from this noisy world,  
And there I'd live in peace,  
So at least I deemed,  
I had left my mind in charge  
Of the house and all it held,  
And desire was at the gate,  
Sentry, stern and bold,  
And anger with its blazing heat  
Kept away the winters cold  
Everything gets soon burnt  
When he gives a reward  
Mighty ego then they chose  
To be their king and lord  
And I in my marble castle, alas,  
Became a prisoner

### THY GRACE

Is my choice all in all?  
Is there no way out of this wall?  
With a heart heavy with grief  
For ages I cried in pain  
Waiting for a word of love  
From the Lord I have never seen.  
Then with a crash as if breaking doors,  
In a flash of light and fragrance ethereal  
Flooding my gloomy cave with bliss  
A presence unseen drew near.  
On its stalk the lotus swayed  
Thousand petalled, pink, immaculate;  
A heavenly smile dispelled the dark  
All was filled with peace and joy.  
And even this earthbound heart could  
hear  
The melody of the eternal flute  
Not only Thy grace, O Lord, Thou  
sendest,  
'Tis Thyself who comest to me

JYOTSNA MOHANTY

## HUMOUR

FATHER of the bride to bridegroom “Will you promise to support my daughter the way she is accustomed to?”

Groom: “Sure, we’re planning to move in with you.”

One would laugh at the above conversation if one found it humorous. But why? Henri Bergson, a French philosopher, says about humour: “Les plus grand penseurs, depuis Aristote, se sont attaqués à ce petit problème, qui toujours se dérobe sous l’effort, glisse, s’échappe, se redresse, impertinent défi jeté à la spéculation philosophique ”

We normally laugh at something which is abnormal. The different methods used in expressing these abnormalities are wit, farce and satire. The most obvious causes of laughter are those induced by tickling or by laughing gas, but laughter due to these is just a physical or reflex reaction and not a spontaneous expression of a feeling. Kant and Spencer found the cause of laughter to be an expectation that suddenly ends in nothing. Schopenhauer found the cause of laughter to be incongruity. This is clearly demonstrated in the example of a high school teacher who amongst her pupils found one lad who had the troublesome habit of monopolising discussions. She decided that such a habit had to be brought to the attention of his parents. So on his report card she wrote, “Allen is a good student but he talks too much.” A few days later the report card was returned. Underneath the teacher’s comment the boy’s father had added: “You should meet his mother.” We laugh at this incident because of the incongruity—we expect to hear an apology from the boy’s father and instead get a supportive reply.

Each one of us has a very distinct sense of humour. A very interesting viewpoint is that our sense of humour is the sense of the gap that exists between the expectations of life and the actualities we observe. Thus our sense of humour is a defence against life’s insanities and by coming to know what makes us laugh the most, we understand what actually frustrates us the most. The JOKE constitutes a miniature model of all these frustrating experiences. That reminds me of a story recounted to me by my uncle who had gone to visit the Bangalore museum. He had stopped to admire a full-sized bronze statue of a girl. Another young man was also admiring the same statue, while his young son glanced up at it and then asked his father, “Father, what’s that?”—“That’s the figure of a woman, sonny.” Before father could speak further, mother, a Mrs. five by five, waddled towards them. The father took one last longing look at the statue, then turning towards his wife said, “Fundamentally, son, fundamentally.” Another joke structure represents the reverse of the frustration story. We are all well acquainted with Bernard Shaw’s exceptional wit but here’s one of the few occasions when Shaw was caught in the net of his own wit and the victory went to Mrs. Shaw, the one who would normally be associated with the underdog. It is

her sudden success that makes us laugh. It seems that once at a party Shaw appealed to his wife by saying, "Dear, don't you believe that male judgment is superior to that of women?" To which Mrs. Shaw sweetly replied, "Of course, dearest. That is why you chose to marry me, and I you."

Different subjects amuse a man at different stages of his life. As a baby, his laughter seems to have no reasonable provocation. He might laugh looking at the ceiling or at his own toes. As a child he laughs at funny actions, odd sounds, grimaces, mainly physical oddities and even ugly things because at this stage he is most concerned with the physical growth of his body and is therefore immature and less sensitive. But with age his mind develops and with it his sense of humour. He no more laughs at farces but appreciates wit and subtle jokes.

Humour follows a similar pattern in the evolution of man in general. Primitive man supposedly did not possess a sense of humour (as he was most concerned about his physical welfare and had a minimal mental capacity) but years of civilization developed his intellect and his understanding of humour.

Each nation too has a distinct sense of humour. The English adore "nonsense", the French detest it. The French adore Rabelais characterized by his 'rire énorme', the Belgians have to see it with their own eyes in order to find it funny. Greeks love satire as they are serious even where humour is concerned. The Swiss like to laugh at their own incapacity, mostly their slowness in understanding and reacting. To the Chinese, with their hard life, laughter comes as a relieving outlet to their frustrations—"I laugh, so I am" is the Chinese philosophy. Nothing can beat the Japanese, though, who generally don't understand humour at all! They might occasionally laugh at a funny story not because of its humour-content but out of politeness. The Germans are very fond of continuing a funny story even when it is over, as in the following: A minister pays a visit to a mad-house. The director takes him to the terrace from where he can see the patients in swimming-trunks jumping from a board into a pool. The minister, charmed, showers praises on the director. The director modestly tells him: "This is only the beginning, wait till the pool is filled with water!" In France, the story would have stopped there, but in Germany it continues. The minister, shocked, runs to a mad-man about to take his spring. "Stop, my friend, don't jump. There is no water in the pool." "All the better," replies the patient before taking off, "I don't know how to swim!"

In India we have an assorted sense of humour. Parsees are reputed to be the people who laugh the most and the Sikhs are the most laughed at. Here's a Sardarji-joke to add to your stock: A thief was once caught by a Sardarji. On their way to the police-station they passed by the thief's house. The man pleaded with the policeman to allow him to go and meet his wife just once to tell her about himself. "You think you're being clever, eh!" said the Sardarji, "You're going to stay right here. I'll go meet your wife instead of you."

From India let's come home and have a taste of humour that is closest to us.



Sri Aurobindo's laughter was the laughter of the Gods. But as he himself writes: "God's laughter is sometimes very coarse and unfit for polite ears; he is not satisfied with being Molière. He needs also to be Aristophanes and Rabelais." Once Nirod-da wrote to him: "Last night I tried to compose a poem. It was a failure. I fell asleep over its first two lines." Sri Aurobindo answered, "You call it a failure when you have discovered a new soporific?"

After this long sermon on humour we sincerely hope that you face life with a bigger grin. Ha ha! Or did we just invent the world's latest soporific?!!!

AUROPOSÉE, KAVITA, VIDYUT

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## A BEAUTIFUL WORLD

THERE is a beautiful world in the sky.  
 If you want to go there,  
 No need for visa, permit or permission.  
 Just go by yourself  
 The way of the sky.  
 No car, no train, no plane,  
 Even no rope-way,  
 Just go by yourself.  
 We think God is in the Heavens,  
 No—don't think God is only in the Heavens,  
 God is also here,  
 God is here within you.  
 There is a beautiful world in the sky.  
 If you want to go there,  
 Make a ladder. The steps—our devotion,  
 Faith, surrender and sincerity.  
 The grace is given to you to reach the Heavens,  
 The help of the Divine  
 Is our way there.

CHUNIBHAI PATEL

## “The Forsaken Merman” by Matthew Arnold

### AN EXPOSITION

ARNOLD has written two poems on the Merman theme. *The Neckan* and *The Forsaken Merman*. Both of them are in the form of chants involving a story. The Neckan laments the lack of kindness in human souls. The Merman bemoans the faithlessness of the mortals. The human wife in both feels that she has no Christian mate. But the resemblance of the two poems stops here. For the Neckan is anxious to redeem himself whereas the Merman has no awareness of the soul at all. Again the Neckan has his wife “safe beneath the salt-sea tide”. But the Merman is the ‘forsaken Merman’. The peculiar state of the Merman, his wife and his children contributes to the pathos in the poem.

The Merman is housed half-way between the animal and the human nature. As an animal he feels the instinctive irresistible call of the sea, his native element. But he has the heart and therefore the emotions of the human being. Hence his ardent longing for companionship and deep grief when forsaken. He is not however a full-blown human being. The higher mental qualities are not seen in him at all. He has memory and imagination—the power of remembering and visualising. But he does not have the power of reflection or thinking. Hence his inconsolable grief. An animal when forsaken by its mate may feel the pang for sometime but soon can and will find another and seek gratification in the new relationship. For on the animal level creatures are not so sharply individualised as they are on the human level. So any one of its kind will satisfy the passion of the animal. But the emotional affinity which unites a man in love with a woman is a marriage and mating of the individually unique elements in both. So the loss of a partner becomes for a man irreparable. There is and can be no substitute for the lost individual. That is precisely the reason why a human being is affected more deeply and lastingly by grief. But the well-developed man has evolved a number of escapes from grief. The higher creative imagination urges him to enter the world of Art where everything is in harmony. Even the ugly elements in life which create a discord in actual life contribute to the total harmony in the world of art. Man can forget himself and his miseries in the pursuit of the beauty of art. Again his intellect can interest itself in the processes of nature and revel in the discovery of their truths. The world of Science is a safe refuge from the turmoil of actual life. Or the higher speculative reason takes all knowledge and all experience as its province, tries to co-ordinate all the ideas and constructs the temple of philosophy in whose sanctuary it can get the peace that passeth all understanding. Or the soul in man directs him to practise religion, dissolve his separative consciousness and will by communion with its Source and Creator who is also the ordainer of this world and its apparently chaotic events including the cause and occasion of man’s grief. The religious mind finds consolation in the

idea that man is living in a world created by God where ‘His will is done’.

But the Merman is denied all the above privileges of the developed human being. He has the emotions of a man without the outlets of escape or sublimation possible on the human level. Alas! the very powers of the mind which make him half-human—Memory and Imagination—only serve to intensify his grief. He tries to visualise the past in an attempt to forget the present which is a state of conflict. But the past pushes him back to the present, for it is so full of memories of the object of grief. This return to the present charged with painful memories makes the grief still more intense and irreconcilable. The Merman at the beginning of the poem is the same as at the end. The emotional conflict remains unresolved and if anything only becomes more intense.

The poem progresses in three movements with three stanzas in each. The first movement describes the emotional conflict which the Merman faces in the present. The second is an attempt to travel in the layers of the Memory and find consolation which he can never get. It is a description of the past whose revival only brings the Merman back to the present. The third movement is a more pathetic description of the poignant present which promises to be perennial and to repeat itself in and actually become the future. The first stanza gives a vivid description of the call of the sea to which the animal in the Merman instinctively feels akin. The sea is now angry as it were and before it becomes impossibly turbulent he must listen to the beckoning voice of the fellow-mermen and reach his cavern home in the depths of the ocean.

But then he has to listen to the equally imperative call of the affections. He cannot draw his heart so easily away from the object of his love. The second stanza describes this call of the affections. He wants the children to make one last fervent appeal.

In the third stanza, we have the attempt of the Merman to resolve this conflict by an apparent and futile resolution. But the desire to have a lingering longing look at the town and the church shows how this resolution is no resolution at all and we know that the emotional conflict is unresolved and also that the Merman cannot solve it by facing it. He must and does seek an escape by recollecting the past.

Thus the three stanzas in the first movement picture the sea, the woman and the fruitless action to resolve the conflict. The same pattern of arrangement is adopted in the second and third movements also, for the Merman can never get beyond this vicious circle.

Thus stanza 4 gives a graphic visualised picture of the sea-home of the Merman, stanza 5 of the woman before her departure and stanza 6 the futile action of the Merman to go and call his mate back. That the Merman has no religious awakening becomes clear by his absence of response to the Easter Church bell or the prayers at Church. He is breathless with impatience and agony at his wife’s departure and complains of the long prayers they say in the

world All the symbols of religion—church, bell, holy book, priests—so sacred to those who seek communion with the Divine, leave him cold, complaining and wretched. When we come to the end of the second movement the Merman has completed his travel in the chambers of his memory and he discovers the painful emotional conflict of the present still more intensely. The second movement describes therefore the futile but inevitable attempt to bring back the past and by reliving it in imagination derive consolation at least.

Stanza 7 gives a picture of the woman alternating between a feeling of joy at the opportunities of human and spiritual fellowship in her town and a sense of agony when she remembers 'the cold strange eyes of the little Mermaiden and the gleam of her golden hair' Stanza 8 once again speaks of the sea and the home of the Merman. But now the Merman has dwelt so long on the object of his affections that he cannot mind exclusively the sea. So we hear the affection and the instinct speaking in one breath and voice here. Stanza 9 describes the sole reconciliation possible for the Merman. He cannot but come back to the shore to have a lingering loving look at the town which now houses his beloved This he must do to give at least a momentary satisfaction to his aching heart. At the same time he must return to his element crying his lament over the faithlessness and the cruelty of 'the mortal who left lonely for ever the kings of the sea'. This agony and chant must go on for ever till the end of time. Perhaps the chant in the elegiac words is the only outlet for his pent-up emotions. Hence the inevitability of the song about his pathetic lot.

The pathos of the poem arises not only from the character and conduct of the Merman but also from those of the human wife who is an epitome of the human predicament itself. The Merman is incapable of realising this predicament and hence his charge of cruelty and faithlessness of the woman. The mortal has deep inlaid in the secret cavern of his inmost heart an immortal soul which can find peace and delight only in divine love. But he has also a human heart which beats in unison with those who can reciprocate his affection. If man is a spiritual being in his essential nature he is also a being of desires and emotions on the surface and most of us live for a good length of time on the surface allowing the soul to have its perilous slumber. Our life and civilization are one long fatal attempt to smother, stifle and dull the spirit and gratify the desires. So we love and marry those who can excite us, for sensuous exhilaration or emotional delectation is one of the factors which cement the life of a couple. The woman in the poem is no exception to this general rule So she has married and has been happy in her life of love for the husband and the children. But God in his grace calls some souls so slumbering and then comes the spiritual awakening. The Church bell at Easter—a time when in his infinite love the 'Father that is in heaven' descended into this finite world of mortals, took upon himself the heavy accumulated load of collective sin, dissolved it in the great Passion, prepared the way for redemption all the time being the son of man and finally gave proof of his divinity by his resurrection—gives the awakening to the woman. The call of God

is imperative and cannot be weighed against any other consideration. I say *cannot* and not *should not* for when one has become the spirit one can only obey its voice. For the still small voice of the slumbering soul becomes the irresistible imperative voice of thunder when the soul wakes up. The deep seeks the deep. The awakened soul seeks the communion of saints which is the Church and forsakes the company of the rest for they cannot give what it seeks. On the other hand it will lose itself and face perdition which is worse than death. The woman in such circumstances will have to renounce even a human husband whose soul is slumbering. No wonder the woman in the poem leaves the sea and the Merman and the children and sings in joy at human and spiritual fellowship. When all is said and done, the Merman is only a half-human creature. The spiritual call cannot brook delay and she cannot wait for the Merman to get a soul and then get an awakening. We have already seen how the Merman has no such awareness at all. But alas! the woman is as much tied to her heart as she is now yoked to the spirit. So she always has an unresolved conflict—the conflict between the call of the spirit which sings a song of joy at being with the symbols and environment for its redemption and the call of the human heart in her which feels agony and heaves ‘a long long sigh for the little mermaiden’. The pity is that the woman is neither quite happy in her home nor can she be happy back in the sea-home. Her situation is the human predicament which springs from the very nature of man who has a double and divided consciousness—an inner spiritual and a surface emotional. The awakened man cannot afford to pass the judgment of cruelty on her but would feel the essentially pathetic situation in which she is found in the poem. Only the divine love and grace can resolve her conflict and convert her pathos into a paean of joy.

The forsaken children in the company of a father essentially inconsolable and perpetually at grief heighten the pathos very much.

We may conclude this exposition by saying that the elegiac genius of Arnold has reached its peak point of perfection in that the music of the poem is in tune with the world of pathos created by the poet.

Arnold’s aim in writing the poem is just to give a picture of the half-human pathos of the Merman and the human pathos of the human wife. In this world of pathos it will be a sacrilege to hunt for a specific moral. The poem is not in the least didactic and this adds to its charm. The intellectual element in Arnold’s genius does not intrude and break the beautiful crystal that the poem is.

Arnold’s personality is essentially that of a man in the throes of a conflict. He has not succeeded in his life in integrating the conflicting elements and getting the peace that his soul has been longing for so that it is not wrong to say that Arnold has put himself into the poem. The central soul of Arnold has found its voice in this poem of conflict and pathos. You meet the same Arnold in ‘The Scholar-Gipsy’ and ‘Thyrsis’.

# SRI AUROBINDO—THE SUPRAMENTAL TRAVELLER

(BASED ON SRI AUROBINDO'S SONNETS\*)

SRI AUROBINDO'S collection of sonnets is a garland of pearls, each sonnet-pearl vying with another in beauty of expression, lofty thoughts and deep intense feelings. On the solid base of his profound integral spiritual wisdom and experience is built the huge edifice of his all-embracing philosophy and yoga. These sonnets reveal the Guru's inner life-story.

This article is a humble attempt to recount Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, yoga, experience and realisation in the light of his own poetic utterances. At the same time, these sonnets unveil the passage of his universal journey commencing right from the region of the Inconscient and then moving gradually upwards towards the triple ascending regions of Matter, Life and Mind, finally reaching the domain of "The Golden Light". Then he brings this Supramental Consciousness into the very earth-substance for the progressive integral transformation of mankind.

In his sonnet "The Miracle of Birth" (p. 157) the Master packs in a nutshell his own life-story right from the beginning of creation.<sup>1</sup>

I saw my soul a traveller through Time;  
From life to life the cosmic ways it trod,  
Obscure in the depths and on the heights sublime,  
Evolving from the worm into the god.

A spark of the eternal Fire, it came  
To build a house in Matter for the Unborn.  
The inconscient sunless Night received the flame,  
In the brute seed of things dumb and forlorn

Life stirred and Thought outlined a gleaming shape  
Till on the stark inanimate earth could move,  
Born to somnambulist Nature in her sleep,  
A thinking creature who can hope and love.

Still by slow steps the miracle goes on,  
The Immortal's gradual birth mid mire and stone.

\* All quotations in this article are exclusively from Sri Aurobindo's *Collected Poems*, SABCL (Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library), Volume 5

<sup>1</sup> Keeping this particular sonnet as the lead story what I propose to do is to include quotations from other sonnets bearing or echoing the identical thought or idea

Sri Aurobindo is not an arm-chair philosopher. He has concretely experienced and lived what he utters. He sees his soul travelling through the passage of Time. The soul which is the spark of the Divine enters the Inconscient. The very fact that this Light or Consciousness descends into the abyss of total darkness is itself a miracle. Each successive stage of the growth of this Consciousness to a higher and higher level right from Matter to Life and then to Mind is a greater miracle. The greatest miracle of all, which is a miracle of miracles, is the birth of the Supramental Consciousness in the very earth-substance.

The whole play of Creation is a two-way journey: a descending journey or Involution and an ascending journey or Evolution. Involution is a progressive degradation from the higher to lower and lower levels of Consciousness. Evolution, on the other hand, is the reverse progression of Consciousness from lower to higher and higher domains. The Supreme, who is Infinite and Timeless, becomes finite and time-bound. In the process of involution He reduces His infinity into a tiny-sized "soul", what the Hindu Scriptures describe as "thumb-sized being" (अगुष्ठमात्र पुरुष). The Spirit, the Light enters the Inconscient.

What is this Inconscient? It is a state of total darkness, a complete absence of any activity or movement, where there is no sign of any consciousness whatsoever. Into this "sunless Night" the supreme Traveller entered and involved Himself,

The inconscient sunless Night received the flame.

This concept of the Divine entering the inconscient is echoed in other Sonnets too:

In the inconscient dreadful dumb Abyss  
Are heard the heart-beats of the Infinite.  
The insensible midnight veils His trance of bliss,  
A fathomless sealed astonishment of Light.

(The Unseen Infinite—p. 160)

or

Yet is the dark Inconscient whence come all...

(The Dumb Inconscient—p. 163)

or

The darkness was the Omnipotent's abode,  
Hood of omniscience, a blind mask of God

(The Inconscient—p. 145)

The supreme Traveller entered into this "sunless Night" and from here He began His upward journey from one plane of consciousness to another.

The question arises as to why the Divine who is Omniscient, All-Light

should stoop into this “inconscient dreadful dumb Abyss”. In fact, it is for the delight of existence, to enjoy Himself in multiplying His infinity into the never-ending finite forms and names that He has condescended to involve Himself in this “insensible midnight”. The supreme Player is

. . . touched by an immense delight to be...

(Shiva—p 150)

and he is the

One who has made in sport the suns and seas..

(Lila—p. 153)

The Supreme wants to reveal Himself, to evolve Himself from the “dark Inconscient”, from apparent nothing or zero to His glorious infinite bright splendour. But He does not want to unmask Himself all at once. He wants to evolve, travel upward gradually. Slowly by progressive steps He wants to unveil His luminous face. Therefore deliberately He hid behind the “blind mask” of the “somnambulist Nature” who takes her own incalculable time to move forward in a slow serpentine pace. The entire evolutionary process, the whole creation is

Born to somnambulist Nature in her sleep...

(The Miracle of Birth—p. 157)

Although Nature is asleep, that is to say, she is ignorant and unconscious, she is waking, she is somehow progressing, evolving. Apparently it seems as though Nature is creating, progressing at random, without any systematic planning or thinking:

Some huge somnambulist Intelligence

Devising without thought process and plan...

(The Inconscient—p. 145)

She is, in fact, the evolutionary or creative Power of the Divine, but she is deliberately kept ignorant and left free to grope in darkness. She progresses by trials and errors. It is the Traveller hidden in the Inconscient who pressurised, coaxed Nature into action and she started toddling upward in the region of Matter, which is an inert, inanimate and dark world. The soul which is “a spark of the eternal Fire” entered into Matter in order to prepare for the yet unmanifested Lord:

... it came

To build a house in Matter for the Unborn

(The Miracle of Birth—p. 157)



The material things and objects are lifeless, inert; and from this brute Matter, Nature with the help of the divine Traveller reached the region of Life:

In the brute seed of things dumb and forlorn...  
Life stirred . (*ibid*)

Then from the plane of Life, He travelled further up and reached the domain of MIND in its very primitive and crude form, just a glimpse of thought:

... and Thought outlined a gleaming shape. (*ibid*)

The “somnambulist Nature” after crawling through infinite trials and errors, created man and developed new qualities

A thinking creature who can hope and love. (*ibid*)

This concept of evolution is reflected in other sonnets too:

Out of a seeming void and dark-winged sleep  
Of dim inconscient infinity  
A Power arose from the insentient deep,  
A flame-whirl of magician Energy  
(The Inconscient—p. 145)

Out of apparent nothing, out of the infinite Inconscient which is like a huge bird in sleep, spreading its vast dark wings all over, a Power arose, and this Force was like whirling fire/“flame” created by some magician Energy. And this

... spark from the eternal Energy spilt...  
(Electron—p. 141)

The whole universe, the entire creation is revolving around the one nucleus, the Supreme Matter is surcharged with Energy. It is the spark of the supreme Energy which has spilt on this vast illimitable universe creating innumerable names and forms.

The electron on which forms and worlds are built,  
Leaped into being, a particle of God. (*ibid*)

The Infinite dwells even in the invisible tiny forms, the electrons which are

Time’s tiny temples of eternity. (*ibid*)

The One has become the Many, and in these multiple forms He hides His oneness. The supreme One in multiplicity of existence is slowly, gradually progressing, evolving—just like a huge edifice being constructed upon a solid base or foundation. Over it the structures are built. First of all it has Matter as its firm base and support. Then over this strong material support Life is built and, over Life, Mind is built. It is man, the thinking creature, on whom depends the unity of the multifarious disparities in the form of culture, religion and civilisation of different nations:

Atom and molecule in their unseen plan  
 Butress an edifice of strange onenesses,  
 Crystal and plant, insect and beast and man,—  
 Man on whom the World-Unity shall seize... *(ibid)*

Hence we see that the divine Traveller who started His journey from the Inconscient, travelled gradually upward—all the time hiding behind “the somnambulist Nature”—towards Matter, which is a lifeless dark region. From Matter He travelled still further up to the plane of Life. Here He created various forms of life; from plants and trees to insects, birds and animals. Then from the region of Life, the great Explorer journeyed still further and reached the domain of Mind. Here He had to explore various possibilities and combinations, then finally after infinite experiments He devised man, the mental creature, made in His own image, man with whose conscious co-operation He could hasten His onward journey to His ultimate destination, the spark, the soul merging with the eternal Fire. Moreover, He has found man a relatively fit instrument by whose conscious effort and will the next step in evolution would be possible to realise. Mind is not the last rung of evolution. The eternal Traveller in Time wants to move still farther and therefore

Still by slow steps the miracle goes on,  
 The Immortal's gradual birth mid mire and stone.  
 (The Miracle of Birth—p. 157)

The miracle of evolution is still continuing “by slow steps”. Now the Immortal wants to reach a region beyond Mind and that is the plane of Supermind. He wants to soar towards the illimitable golden-hued skies.

Human life is a grace bestowed upon man by the Almighty. Man, the thinking creature, has been given a golden opportunity to reveal the hidden Traveller in the span of a lifetime instead of keeping Him hiding behind the cloak of “blind Nature” for centuries together. Nature has a hold on man so long as he wants to remain her prisoner, but once he decides and wills to change himself, the Traveller in man takes charge of him and leads him to his ultimate goal by

leaps and bounds, finally merging him with the Supreme. Man becomes the Infinite.

To reach the final destination man must free himself from the “hooks and gyves” of “somnambulist Nature”, and that is possible by establishing contact with his soul. This contact with the inner Traveller is possible by the practice of yoga, which is the process or means to accelerate man’s onward journey toward the Supreme. Yoga is a dynamic method by means of which God in man frees him from the shackles of his present dark and ignorant lower nature, that is his physico-vital-mental being, and leads him towards the ultimate Truth.

At present man is ego-bound and his mental-vital-physical consciousness is preoccupied with all sorts of low thoughts, feelings and actions. By means of yoga he must free himself from the clutches of ego and rise into higher and higher levels of consciousness. Progressively he has to rise, travel from one plane of one consciousness to another; from the Individual Divine Consciousness to the Cosmic Divine Consciousness and then to the Transcendental Divine Consciousness.

### The Individual—Universal—Transcendental Consciousness

Man is a bundle of ego. His is a separative individual consciousness. He thinks in terms of I and me, mine and his, and is unable to come out of this selfish ego-bound prison. Ego is so interwoven in each and every part of man’s consciousness that it is impossible to tear free from its “ignoble spell” without the divine intervention:

Each movement of our life our ego fills;  
 Inwoven in each thread of being’s weft,  
 When most we vaunt our selflessness, it steals  
 A sordid part; no corner void is left.

(The Little Ego—p. 157)

Ego has infiltrated everywhere, it has captured all the nooks and corners of man’s physico-vital-mental nature. This egoistic separative individual consciousness brings falsehood, ignorance, suffering and death in its trail. They are “the iron dreadful Four”:

Masters of falsehood, Kings of ignorance,  
 High sovereign Lords of suffering and death.

(The Iron Dictators—p. 166)

These four “Iron Dictators” are

Cold propagandists of a million lies,  
Dictators of a world of agony. (*ibid*)

Truly speaking, the Divine has created on purpose these negative, chaotic and destructive forces as a means or a strategy to awaken in man the need to free himself from these foursome hostile powers. The Traveller-Poet asks a mock-question:

... was it Thou who bor'st the fourfold mask? (*ibid*)

Then He Himself reveals the answer:

Enveloping Thy timeless heart in Time,  
Thou hast bound the spirit to its cosmic task,  
To find Thee veiled in this tremendous mime. (*ibid*)

Behind this “fourfold mask”, “this tremendous mime”, the Divine is hiding. To free himself from these dire dictators who exert their destructive influence due to the presence of ego, man must first contact his soul, the individual Divine within him, the seat of Light, Delight and Love, and then become one with it. This can be done by a total surrender to the Supreme:

One way lies free, our heart and soul to give,  
Our body and mind to Thee and every cell,  
And steeped in Thy world-infinity to live  
Then lost in light, shall fade the ignoble spell.  
(The Little Ego—p. 157)

A complete surrender of all our being—physical, vital, mental, heart and soul—is a must for overcoming the inner enemy, ego, and destroying it:

I have given my mind to be dug Thy channel mind,  
I have offered up my will to be Thy will:  
Let nothing of myself be left behind  
In our union mystic and unutterable.  
(Surrender—p. 153)

The human traveller tells the Divine that he aspires for integral surrender:

Let nothing of myself be left behind .. (*ibid*)

A sincere and burning aspiration helps man to fight the battle with the hostile

egoistic forces within him. Though the progress is slow, by constant and persistent aspiration and surrender to the Supreme, man is sure to reach the final destination:

Aspiring to godhead from insensible clay  
He travels slow-footed towards the eternal day.

(Man the Thinking Animal—p. 134)

The Divine is everywhere He is in man, around him, in each and every form and object:

He is in me, around me, facing everywhere.  
Self-walled in ego to exclude His right. .

(Omnipresence—p. 162)

What is preventing man from contacting the Omnipresent is his egoistic nature, which is in the hands of “somniaulist Nature”.

This strutting “I” of human self and pride  
Is a puppet built by Nature for her use ..

(“I”—p. 161)

By constant aspiration for and total surrender to the Infinite a contact is established with the soul, and then the Omnipresent in man takes charge of his inner progress towards his ultimate goal—to merge with Him. Man attains the Individual Divine Consciousness or the Psychic Transformation.

In the Sonnet “The Body” (p. 159) Sri Aurobindo compares man with a “purse” and the soul with a “passport”:

... for in the folds is hid  
His secret passport to eternity.

Man must find this “passport” if he intends to travel further towards the vast inner worlds and soar towards the limitless inner skies. As man travels farther and farther in the infinite worlds within him, he begins to see more and more beautiful landscape and scenery. This terrestrial green earth is indeed beautiful, but far more beautiful are the inner worlds; there is

A deeper greenness than this laughing assault  
Of emerald rapture pearled with tears of dew

(The Inner Fields—p. 169)

We are participating in the festival of green beauty—fields, trees with their lush foliage, the blades of grass, etc. The whole earth is happy / “laughing” and there

is an attack of bright green ecstasy, a “laughing assault of emerald rapture”. The phrase “pearled with tears of dew” graphically describes the beauty of the early morning when the tender rays of the rising sun reflect upon the dew-drops and they shine like beautiful ray-kissed rainbow-hued tears. The entire green earth is shedding tears of joy. When the dew-drops settle round a leaf or a blade of green grass they look like a chain of pearls.

This green earth is rich (“emerald”, “pearl”) with beauty (“fields”) and joy (“laughing”, “rapture”) but greener and more beautiful are the inner fields. There is richer, deeper, more beautiful greenness in them, an assault of divine ecstasy all around:

Through glimmering veils of wonder and delight  
World after world bursts on the awakened sight.

(The Other Earth—p. 133)

Wonder is a gift from God. It opens the eye for inner vision and widens the heart for deeper feelings and as a result man passes through a greater transforming experience. The inner sight reveals the extraordinary in the ordinary, the common becomes the uncommon. Wonder is

Fresh childhood in the obscured human heart.

(To the Cuckoo—p. 123)

A child sees the world with wonder. For him all events, all experiences are new, extraordinary, uncommon. There is a freshness and beauty which unfortunately gets buried as he grows up to become a man. “Child” is the symbol of soul, and as man loses contact with his soul he loses this precious gift of wonder. Man must regain his “fresh childhood”. Then each new remarkable event and experience would stir in him a deep joy of discovery and revelation, and encourage him to explore and discover the other new worlds. As the inner eyes open, the human Traveller sees God’s beauty everywhere:

Sight’s endless artistry is Thou alone.

(Because Thou art...—p. 165)

The Divine is All-Beauty,

And all grows beautiful because Thou art.

(The Divine Hearing—p. 164)

A thing of beauty stimulates the feeling of joy, ecstasy:

Thy joy is there in every leaf and stone:

(Because Thou art...—p. 165)

The Divine is All-Bliss. It is for the delight of existence that He created the infinite forms and names, and

Each sight is now immortal with Thy bliss.

(Divine Sight—p. 165)

The “divine sight” reveals the whole universe as the manifestation of the Supreme to the senses:

A veil is rent and they no more can miss

The miracle of Thy world-epiphany...

(*ibid*)

“Because Thou art All-beauty and All-bliss,” (Because Thou art...—p. 165) everywhere and in everything the Traveller sees beauty and his heart overflows with delight. His consciousness gradually grows, widens and finally merges with the Universal Divine Consciousness or he attains Spiritual Transformation:

I have wrapped the wide world in my wider self

(Cosmic Consciousness—p. 144)

or

I contain the wide world in my soul’s embrace...

(The Indwelling Universal—p. 142)

or

The burning galaxies are in me outlined;

The universe is my stupendous whole.

(The Cosmic Spirit—p. 161)

The Traveller “wraps”, “embraces” the entire universe as the Divine:

His hair was mingled with the sun and breeze,

The world was in His heart and He was I...

(The Godhead—p. 148)

or

In me Arcturus and Belphegor burn.

To whatsoever living form I turn

I see my own body with another face.

All eyes that look on me are my sole eyes;

The one heart that beats within all breasts is mine.

(The Indwelling Universal—p. 142)

The Traveller has become the entire universe and all that exists in it—the

burning stars and galaxies and beasts and man—all the living creatures. He experiences all the feelings and emotions of love and hatred. Joy and pain and anger that exist upon earth:

All passions poured through my world-self their waves...  
(Life-Unity—p. 146)

and

I housed within my heart the life of things,  
All hearts athrob in the world I felt as mine... (ibid)

He has

..felt the anger in another's breast.. (ibid)

and

One love I shared in a million bosoms expressed.  
I am the beast man slays, the beast he saves. (ibid)

and

I shared the joy that in creation sings  
And drank its sorrow like a poignant wine. (ibid)

This universal joy and sorrow experienced by the Traveller is echoed in a number of sonnets:

The world's happiness flows through me like wine,  
Its million sorrows are my agonies.  
(The Indwelling Universal—p. 142)

or

The world's joy thrilling runs through me, I bear  
The sorrow of millions in my lonely breast.  
(Cosmic Consciousness—p. 144)

or

My life is the life of village and continent,  
I am earth's agony and her throbs of bliss;  
I share all creatures' sorrow and content  
And feel the passage of every stab and kiss  
(The Cosmic Spirit—p. 161)

The Cosmic Traveller identifies Himself totally with the world's passions and emotions of joy and pain and suffering, of love and hatred and anger. This wide Universal Divine Consciousness is a route or passage through which He has to journey in order to soar still higher into the plane of Transcendental Consciousness Though



I have learned a close identity with all...  
 (Cosmic Consciousness—p. 144)

Yet all its acts are only waves that pass  
 Upon my surface .  
 (The Indwelling Universal—p. 142)

and

I rose by them towards a supernal plane...  
 (Life-Unity—p. 146)

There is a plane of consciousness which transcends this vast universal consciousness:

Wider behind than the vast universe..  
 (The Kingdom Within—p. 140)

The Traveller reaches this “wider”, transcendental consciousness:

Carrying in me the universe’s call  
 I mount to my imperishable home  
 (Cosmic Consciousness—p. 144)

All the myriad surface activities of the universe are merely endless waves on the infinite ocean of consciousness and in its depth all is quiet, still for ever

Yet all its acts are only waves that pass  
 Upon my surface; inly for ever still,  
 Unborn I sit, timeless, intangible...  
 (The Indwelling Universal—p. 142)

He passes

.. beyond Time and life on measureless wings. .  
 (Cosmic Consciousness—p. 144)

and the Traveller reaches His “imperishable home”—the Supreme, and

I shall be merged in the Lonely and Unique  
 And wake into a sudden blaze of God...  
 (The Infinite Adventure—p. 147)

He merges with the eternal One who is Infinite, beyond time and space. Then all the multifarious acts of the universal “drama and the stir” recede into the background and the Traveller experiences

A peace, a light, an ecstasy, a power...  
 (The Kingdom Within—p. 140)

and He becomes the Supreme Himself in His Transcendental plane

Of power and love and deathless ecstasies.  
 (Life-Unity—p. 146)

Sri Aurobindo's Yoga does not stop here. It is not just a one-way journey from the individual egoistic plane of consciousness to the Individual Divine Consciousness, then travelling higher into the plane of the Universal Divine Consciousness, and finally ending the journey by reaching the highest domain of the Transcendental Divine Consciousness, and then remaining there lost in perpetual peace, light, love, power and ecstasy. His Integral Yoga demands a return journey to the lower domains of consciousness in order to effect a total transformation of man's imperfect and yet unenlightened nature—that is his physico-vital-mental being—in the light of that highest Transcendental Consciousness. The darkness and suffering and death must be replaced by the divine Light and Delight and Immortality.

This total change or transformation of man is possible by what the Master terms the Supramental Truth-Consciousness, which is an all-comprehensive and all-transforming Power of the Supreme. He does not mention the word "Supermind" anywhere in his sonnets but he has used the word "sun" and the phrase "The Golden Light" which substitutes "Supermind".

In the sonnet "The Golden Light" (p. 146) Sri Aurobindo describes the descent of the Golden Light in all the parts or centres of his being (mind, throat, heart and feet) uniting him integrally with the Supreme, with the Supermind's all-transforming Power, bringing a radical and total change in all the parts of his lower nature. I am tempted to quote the whole sonnet:

Thy golden Light came down into my brain  
 And the grey rooms of mind sun-touched became  
 A bright reply to Wisdom's occult plane,  
 A calm illumination and a flame.

Thy golden Light came down into my throat,  
 And all my speech is now a tune divine,  
 A paean-song of Thee my single note;  
 My words are drunk with the Immortal's wine.

Thy golden Light came down into my heart  
 Smiting my life with Thy eternity;

Now has it grown a temple where Thou art  
And all its passions point towards only Thee.

Thy golden Light came down into my feet;  
My earth is now Thy playfield and Thy seat.

The Poet of the Future conveys to the Supreme that his mind which was hitherto ignorant and dark is illumined and brightened as soon as the golden Light descended into his brain. In the mind there are rooms. "Mind" is ignorant, so its rooms too are grey and dull. As the supramental Light enters the brain, the dark gloomy rooms of mind fill with the all-encompassing light of the sun, and the mind is able to fathom the hidden secret regions of supreme Truth, Wisdom; Wisdom is supreme Knowledge and experience. As the mind gets illumined it begins to understand the mystical, esoteric secrets of the supreme Truth. Mind becomes a steady and tranquil fire and its flame rises straight towards the Lord. Generally, mind is not only ignorant, it is also restless, unsteady. By the influence of the Supermind, its flame rises steadily, unflickeringly, one-pointedly towards the Supreme.

By the descent of the Supermind the grey substance of the brain changes into a pure bright golden substance. The words "bright", "sun", "light", "illumination", "flame", "golden", all indicate the radical transformation of mind.

By the influence of the golden Light entering the Traveller's throat, his speech and words are so drunk with the Divine's wine that they utter nothing other than the divine Love, Truth, Peace, Power and Ecstasy. All his speech has only one single subject or point to discuss and that is the Supreme:

And all my speech is now a tune divine.

His single note is a song of thanksgiving in praise of the supreme Lover. Then the golden Light enters the Poet's heart and his entire life is seized, captured by the Eternal's force. His heart becomes a temple where the Lord can abide and all its desires, "passions" are directed solely towards Him. When the supramental Consciousness descends into the lowest extremity of the body,

My earth is now thy playfield and thy seat.

"Feet" represent the Inconscient. The supramental Light enters into the Poet's feet and the Supreme transforms the inconscient body and makes it His "seat" of light and consciousness. He also makes the body His "playfield" where the supreme Player can play according to His own rules of the Game.

As the direct result of the descent of the supramental consciousness in every

part of his being, the Supramental Traveller becomes a totally transformed Being:

I have drunk the Infinite like a giant's wine.  
(Transformation—p. 133)

He is soaked, saturated in the Infinite's wine of Love, Truth, Beauty, Light, Power and Delight. He has a huge amount, a giant's dose of this all-transforming wine which flows in every cell and nerve of His being. He has become totally intoxicated, integrally possessed by the Supreme. Even His senses participate in this Gnostic Transformation:

My senses change into gold gates of bliss...  
(The Inner Sovereign—p. 155)

The sense-organs transform into supramental "gates" through which the divine Delight floods His senses, and

An ecstasy thrills through touch and sound and sight .. (*ibid*)

His skin feels the Supreme's loving touch and the Traveller is thrilled with the Immortal's bliss.

I feel Thy touch; Thy bliss imperishable  
Is crowded into that moment of delight.  
(Divine Sense—p. 166)

His ears are tuned to the supreme Musician's voice in all its myriad sounds and voices:

All sounds, all voices have become Thy voice .  
(The Divine Hearing—p 164)

And in each voice I hear Thy magic tune..  
(Because Thou art. —p 165)

All the external sounds and voices, even the harsh and nagging noises,

The machine's reluctant drone, the siren's blare .  
Blowing upon the windy horn of Space .  
(The Divine Hearing—p. 164)

are in tune with the inner harmonious melody. The Traveller begins to see God in each and every object and thing, and He experiences the delight of discovering the Infinite abiding in infinite finite forms:

Into an ecstasy of vision caught  
 Each natural object is of Thee a part...  
 (Divine Sight—p 165)

He hears nothing but the divine Melodies and sees nothing but the divine Beauty:

Hearing and sight are now an ecstasy.  
 (Divine Sense—p 166)

His organ of smell also receives only divine Fragrance:

And all the fragrances of earth disclose  
 A sweetness matching in intensity  
 Odour of the crimson marvel of the rose. (ibid)

All the perfumes of earth change into the sweet odours of love, beauty and ecstasy. The Traveller's organ of taste too undergoes a radical change:

Surely I take no more an earthly food  
 But eat the fruits and plants of Paradise! (ibid)

He relishes the sweetness and delight of the divine Rasa existing all around Him. The supramental Traveller is everywhere that endless golden Light of the Supreme:

I am a centre of Thy golden light  
 And I its vast and vague circumference.  
 (Bliss of Identity—p 142)

He has integrally identified Himself with the infinite supramental Glory. The circumference is "vast", limitless and measureless. It is "vague", because that which is infinite cannot have a definite and clear-cut line or form. And He has become

A thunderblast of His golden ecstasy's might .  
 (The Bliss of Brahman—p 158)

His contact or union with the All-bliss has generated a powerful supramental delight in Him and as a result He has become a loud announcer (“thunderblast”) of God’s dynamic golden ecstasy. He is the harbinger as well as the Avatar of the coming age—the Supramental Age.

Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga aims not only at the total transformation of the individual but also at an integral earth-transformation. His Yoga is not a world-renouncing but earth-accepting Yoga. Earth too is a habitation of the Omnipresent, and the Master requests:

O worshipper of the formless Infinite,  
Reject not form, what lives in form is He.

(Form—p. 167)

And Form is

A cavern of the deathless Eremite.

(*ibid*)

Form is a cave in which the immortal Hermit dwells. The Infinite has made the finite form a cave for His Yoga of earth-transformation. Generally, seekers of God neglect earth-life and escape to a forest or hide somewhere in a mountain cave. Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga embraces all the multifarious activities of terrestrial life. No work, no activity is low or high in the eye of the Lord. As man progressively travels to higher and higher states of consciousness, simultaneously he must involve all the activities and actions of the world and strive to perfect them in the light and power of the consciousness attained on his upward journey towards the All-Perfect. All his mental, vital and physical pursuits and activities must reflect that higher Consciousness, Truth, Delight and Perfection.

In the sonnet “The Pilgrim of the Night” (p. 144) Sri Aurobindo reveals His mission as the Avatar of the New Age. He has descended into the very abyss of Inconscience in order to uplift the whole of humanity, the entire earth towards the supreme “Friend”:

I made an assignation with the Night,  
In the abyss was fixed our rendezvous:

The supramental Traveller has come with a definite mission and that is to change or transform the very earth-substance which is at present dark. He has embarked upon a totally unknown path no one ever dared to step upon. A torch-lit Mind sees Truth in parts or portions. It is an incompetent guide to lead man through this path. Only an all-embracing, all-enlightening golden Light has the inherent dynamic Power to guide effectively towards the next stage in evolution and that is the Supermind.

Abandoning the Supreme’s Light, Delight and Immortality He has entered into the darkness, suffering and death in order to hew out.

A pathway towards Immortality.

(*ibid*)

The pathway is long, arduous and dangerous but He is sure that a day will come when the blind Nature herself—the Supreme's executive Power—will aspire to become one with Her own counterpart:

. her face  
She lifts to Him who is Herself, until  
The Spirit leaps into the Spirit's embrace.

(Shiva—p. 150)

And then all humanity or the entire earth will travel rapidly towards higher and wider ranges or domains of consciousness. It will follow its journey from Truth to higher Truth, from Light to brighter Light, from Love to deeper Love, from Delight to greater Delight, from Power to more dynamic Power.

ARVINDBABU

# CHRISTALIS

by

GEORGETTE COTY

*(Continued from the issue of March 1996)*

## Enlightenment

EVERYTHING was different now, every cell in my body was filled with the knowledge of the event. As if part of me belonged to that other life—and this one here, with its everyday existence, lived in accordance with it. Yet neither could be perfectly effective without the other. How to join them together? Such was the question in my mind.

This is the task then, this is what has to be achieved. I understood my task with clarity. Two halves of one being, each quite oblivious of the other. Is this then the source of our difficulties? How to establish a bilateral existence? Here must be the key to our future life. Nothing less would alter it. I would have to ask Christalis about this when he comes.

“Yes, Halio, this is the issue. You have found the key, but not yet the knowledge of how to turn it in the lock. That indeed is the task.”

He did not come this time, but gave me his attention from within, through our two-way radio, as I had come to call it.

“Contemplate, contemplate,” was his advice, “much was given you to assimilate. Let it take hold of your consciousness. Do not ask questions as yet, we shall attend to them later.” His voice came a little stronger: “Higher knowledge cannot be dealt with by the mind. It addresses itself to perception at best, coming to it from the Higher Mind. Link the two together very gradually, give it the required time it needs. I will not come for some time, for I wish to let you absorb things—until I know that this is done. I’ll wait.”

“Remain quiet as much as possible, Christopher will not disturb you, he is also entering into his own sphere of inner expansion and the children will be the first to register the change in you and will draw tranquillity from it. They will give you no trouble either”—and he added—“You have my love and so does the boy, we are connected at all times, remember that.”

It was during this period I experienced that within myself not one but several levels of consciousness had their fields of play. When I was tranquil, concentrated, I could be active in all those spheres simultaneously and remain observant of them—concerted at least in the already conscious fields in myself.

My body performed its tasks unhindered, in fact with better energy. My emotions were at peace. harmonious, beneficial to my children. As Christalis



had indicated, they also responded in a concerted manner in their activities. Above all, my mind—that customary rattle-box and disturber—attended with extraordinary aptitude to matters before it.

This indeed was a remarkable discovery. In this state of harmonious collaboration, other faculties of my inner awareness were able to contemplate matters above themselves and to receive flashes of knowledge coming to them. This was enlightenment!

True, when evening fell upon most of my daytime activities, I was able to make a more conscious effort to go into myself. I found now that this state of contemplation was not all that different from what I had experienced during the day while doing my physical chores. Here was a valuable discovery, because I understood how much depended on the quietude and harmony within myself. If only one could make it a lasting state of affairs! Not an easy task, I thought.

But meditation was another thing. And this was my next discovery, because when I succeeded in going sufficiently deep into it, those other consciousnesses were automatically stilled and allowed my unhindered flight, or should I say journey, toward higher consciousnesses, seeking access to them.

“This is what I was waiting for!” came Christalis’s voice triumphantly.

Here was my beloved friend before me. I greeted him with even, unruffled joy, not with expressions of tumultuous delight, as had been my custom before. He looked deep into my eyes, making of them mirrors of his scrutiny. Satisfied, gladdened it seemed, he reached for my hand and embraced me as I came to meet him. He touched my body to which he always referred as the temple of Halio. Obediently, it lay down to sleep.

“You have opened another gate on your journey, as you rightly call it, Halio. Now I have come to help to keep that gate open. There are many of them, you know. Later you will gain entry into other spheres where each of them exists in its own marvellous reality with wondrous illuminations to give you. . . The day will come when we will bring them down to earth.

“Come then, we have covered a good bit of our journey, let us indulge in the scenery before we move on.”

Once again we sat under the tree that had come to be my great friend, under whose canopy I had received so much wisdom. I called it my teaching tree.

“This is a hallowed place for me, Christalis, thank you for choosing it. But you know, it comes to my mind sometimes that I did not see your own living quarters when we visited your dear parents. Yet I would love to engrave its memory in my heart’s special place. Would you again invite me there. . . one day maybe? Is this a silly thing to ask?”

“Now, that is my childish Halio again. Curious, or plain silly? I shall take you there, when the time is right for it. I do not live where you visited, but where I have my work to do.”

I probed no further, there were so many other things I hoped to hear from

him. Each of those living Planes and the Timepiece that marks God's time were burning within my memory in flaming images.

"Christalis," I burst out at last, "do all the high-souled ones, such as yourself, have access to those records of the world's history... and to that other . the Golden Globe, where.. " I was hesitant to put it into words, so overwhelming was the memory of it. But at last haltingly... I pronounced it. . "where the God-Plan is held?—That is such an awesome knowledge! To think of the Timepiece ticking away for events to happen. Is everything predestined then?" I managed to ask.

"Not in the sense that you give it," he responded, "since men have the choice to act out their actions in God-given freedom, but within an allotted time, which we call epochs, or cycles. When that time comes to a termination, then yes, the God-Plan comes into effect.

"As for the access to the Records, they are accessible only for reasons of learning and for no other. The Divine Mother bestowed that permission upon you for the same reason."—He paused here before continuing.... "Yourself having been received by Her, Halio, was the greatest gift any soul can receive. I think you understand that, don't you?"

I shut my eyes before replying, "I have no words for that bliss! Truly, I witnessed the glory of heaven! If there is a mirror to reflect my heart's feeling—then look for it there, for She has made me part of Herself and Herself part of me. If these words are sacrilegious, then blame my soul for it, but I speak the truth."

"Come nearer to me, let me look into your eyes. They show me the flowering of your inner bud. What you have just uttered is the living truth, the experience of a high reality. Indeed, you find Her living in the centre of your own heart... Turn inward to that presence for whatever guidance you need at all times. I am the happiest for this gift given you, more than I can express. Look at me still, I can see the flaming letters of each phase of the sacred Plan mirrored there. Tell me, do they worry you?"

I had to pause to look into myself before I answered this question. Having posed it, I found to my amazement that it caused me no pain.

"No, it does not worry me, Christalis, at least it doesn't where we are now. What I rather feel is an immense awe, a humility rising from me toward the Higher Will. My only wish is to serve it for all time to come.. and to become a fit server to that Will." I had to stop and rest my mind awhile, even the memory of it overwhelmed me so.

"The thought that I was permitted to enter such a place, to come face to face with God's design, has emptied me of any weakness of anxiety, Christalis. Even of the feeling of hopelessness I may have had from time to time in the midst of heavy odds. Nothing else matters now, but to bow to that Will, to become a conscious part of it, to be permitted to work for it. . and to await the time when

His great Light will shine upon our world How I pray for that, day and night!"

I was silent now, and Christalis offered no comment. He seemed to have waited to observe what further effects that experience had on me. Was he waiting for any question of mine?—I wondered—so I opened the dialogue after all.

"If you would permit me, I should like to seek illumination of the meaning of the Mirrored Light—and actually I am a little hazy about the Unveiling Time as well. However, if you don't wish to speak of it, I will be just as content I am that already."

More silence My revered teacher-friend had sought permission to fulfil my request. I stirred no further and calmly awaited the result. It came after some time to reward my patience.

"Let us then give this day to further learning. We shall come to cover your question step by step, and when more comprehension for it is needed, I shall spare no effort to bring it to your understanding.

"Listen carefully, Halio. Your progress of learning warrants your request for further knowledge. You understand now that every cycle in men's development is given a period of time Within the span of that period, the play of the forces of Light and Darkness is worked out All these great cycles are divided into sections—lesser cycles, that is. Certain directives for their progressions come to men through their more awakened souls Yet, when the tendency toward the rule of darkness and delusion has the upper hand, hindering progression, greater souls are sent forth to correct it. They are the forerunners of humanity, its teachers and its redeemers. In truth, they are Heavenly Beings, who take embodiment for that very purpose.

"The teachings and the new directives they bring to men will be light enough to illumine the period into which they come. But their first task is to remove from the scene the forces that are against the Light, those that covered the minds of the people and the nations, by which act they plunged them into darkness—obstructing their visions toward the right direction.

"These great liberators appear from time to time, as I said, whenever their intervention becomes necessary. Their task is immense, dangerous and difficult, because men seldom recognise who they are, seeing them as bodies similar to theirs. Yet their work is done!... Old things are swept aside, giving way to new ones.... This was the pattern up till now. Are you taking that in, Halio?"

I gave a silent gesture of affirmation, not wishing to interrupt the flow of his words.

"When, however, the end of a great period is at hand, the Clock signals the onset of the Supreme Light's Descent. At this stage a great variety of things begin to happen. Not at once, as you might think. Were that to happen, this world would be entirely dissolved in its Light. There would be no more world to develop. But the mirrored image of Light, in suitably reduced intensity, begins

to be observable in every field of existence.

“Enlightened people register it in a positive way. There are new discoveries, benevolent actions in all social and scientific fields, and there is a burst of artistic flowering as well. Those people have received the touch of the Light.

“But this is not all, because under this descending Light, men are suddenly obliged to observe themselves as well as those around them with greater clarity—as if looking into a mirror which now shows the image in a light not observed before. And this is quite a frightening state of affairs for those who would rather go on hiding under the old conditions of somnolence to which they were accustomed. So they resist the illuminating force as long as they can.

“But the Clock moves on—and the Unveiling Hour strikes. The shrouds of untruth and delusion are removed, rent off in one clean sweep, revealing things and actors of the epoch, showing them without a cover, as they really are.

“Under this tremendous pressure of the light of Truth, there is no more a chance to remain somnambulant. However strong the resistance and the wish to get away from this persistent pursuer, there is nowhere to hide from it any longer.

“At this stage, another major movement is introduced into the field of action. ACCELERATION! Time and Action are accelerated with increasing rapidity. Events follow events so suddenly, so fast and unexpectedly that there is hardly any time left to vacillate. Time has run out! God’s Will is on the move. It takes the lead.

“The first reaction of men is fear. Not surprisingly, since this force is immensely rapid in its devastating stride, as you have already experienced. Truly, it is a Time of very great Trials. Yet it sweeps the field clear of the debris of past wrongs and prepares it for the ensuing stage.

“Error, falsity, have to be turned back to Truthfulness, you see, leading to right action—ignorance and deception toward true knowledge and its right utility. Order and Balance have to be reinstated!”

He paused, looking at me to observe if I had shown signs of sorrow in remembering what had taken place in my world—but I remained tranquil, evenly poised—so he went on, assured that he could.

“Is it not wonderful to look to a brighter future?”, he said joyously. “The battle is over, the heroes are never truly gone. They are with us in the recreating movement, gathering light and knowledge for their well-timed return.

“The Lord of Supreme Light knows the direction of the everchanging earthly play. Before His all-seeing eyes, ages roll past... He watches the cinerama calmly, unperturbed—observingly. He knows that the best part of His play is yet to come. The finest hour for humanity rests happily in His Mind. And He smiles. He always smiles, because He is all bliss, all love, and all truth.

“Dear Halio, the time will come when the mirror onto which the Light of Truth has fallen will no longer show the dwarfed images of what was wrong, but will reflect the image of the Maker in man himself—His handiwork in all He

looks upon. Man can at last pass through the mirrored image and move toward the True Light, where his separation ends. That time comes nearer with every tick of the Clock set by His Will.”

He stopped now. Great inner bliss fell upon both of us as we sat beneath that tree which witnessed this great revelation. Its leaves took on a glow as they whispered, “O! Lord of the Light”, rustling above us.

It was I who broke the silence to give vent to my feelings.

“Christalis, you blessed, blessed friend! How am I to thank you for all this knowledge? How may I prove to you my gratitude? You show me the future that is a glory.. the future that will erase the pains of the past and bring happiness at last to us all. What I owe to you is beyond measure. May I become worthy of it!

“I have seen the smiling face of the Great Mother of Love... but all at once a veil seemed to have hidden it, yet I saw not the veil. What a mystery! And the last of the God-Design heralds Her veil being removed ... What does this really mean? I feel in my heart that this will bring very great changes and happiness to our lives. But why is Her face hidden, Christalis? Why?”

He took a deep breath before answering.

“What a profound question this is! I can only answer it in brief at this stage. To say that the Lord is the creator of the whole universe is the truth. But His action could not manifest without the other half of Himself, the manifesting force which is given to the Divine Mother She has chosen to act and to carry out Her work and His Will without revealing Herself as yet. But, in truth, She is the manifesting power in the universe

“The God-Time beckons, as you have observed, when She will show Her own reality, when She will come to the fore and bring closer to earth the Higher Light, because She embodies it... The Golden Age will begin.”

These words stunned me! “Is there more to learn? Oh, happy me, fortunate me! Will this knowledge live in every heart? To know that wonderful things will come to pass, to know that we will be given a new life—an enlightened life!

“Will you, O Great Ones, sing of it to men’s souls whilst they dream and labour away their days? Won’t you make their dreams happy? Give them a glimpse of your felicity, share with them a little of what you know of tomorrow’s glory.

“Happiness, even if in dreams, can light up our days. We are not used to plenty, even a crumb of it is much, even a touch of delight is enough... if you would only give it .. a small advance, won’t you please?”

“Pray on, pray on, dear one, it will bring heaven’s gift closer. What you ask is good.”

I looked to him and he read my knowledge of the heavy ordeals we had endured, the painful ticks of the Clock that had passed. One by one, those letters of the Designs passed before my eyes. They were my history and I laid them before the Mother’s feet to bless their memory—to enfold into Her loving arms

those children of Hers who had laid down their lives to fulfil the Designs of the Will

Rows upon rows of people, young and old, good and bad . animals and green things came in endless lines, passing before Her... Her arms were opened wide Her lips were smiling as She received them, healing their wounds, making them whole again and they too smiled back as they went past. . not remembering . forgetting all, they only saw Her smile, which was Life, which was Love

*(To be continued)*

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## THE SERVICE TREE

O THOU lush-green swinging canopy,  
 Spread over the SAMADHI of our Master and The Mother,  
 With all thy pulsating branches, twiggy sticks,  
 Glistening leaves and meditating flowers;  
 How dost thou feel the lovely parrots  
 That hide themselves in thy cosy bosom,  
 And crane their necks and exquisite beaks,  
 Looking downwards, and regard wistfully  
 The stream of devotees offering myriads of flowers?

What enthralling sensations overwhelm thee  
 When squirrels dance over thy outstretched body?  
 Do the dark crows perching on thee utter 'KA', 'KA',  
 To involve the 'K'ind blessings of Sri 'A'urobindo?  
 When night-birds flutter their wings playfully  
 And preen their feathers, Silence opens Its eyes to smile  
 Over the surcharged ambience of deep austerity.

The golden 'Service' flowers adorning thee  
 Always yearn to fall on the glorious shrine,  
 Slowly and steadily, with feather-weight touch;  
 The sacred blossoms aspire for ever to kiss  
 The rain-washed and sun-glossed divine imprints  
 Of the twin Avatars, lying in perfect repose,  
 Preparing silently for the Grand Resurrection

SURESH DE

## GHOST HOUR

WHO goes there at this hour of night  
With steps that speak but of silence?  
This hour, when not a flicker of light  
Is shed from a window, betraying  
A wakeful soul. The moon shines pale.  
The starry twinkles lie scattered  
Around the waning moon, like gems  
Torn from a necklace by a ruthless hand  
Under such sombre canopy of gloom  
A shadow with cautious silence glides,  
Like a ghost to haunt the night,  
Or as a wild cat stalking its prey,  
Moves along the dark, deep fence.  
It stops so as to hear a call,  
A breaking of twigs, a rustling of leaves,  
Then moves again along the fence,  
Stops at the gate and looks about  
Straining to hear any low faint sound.  
Climbing the gate, it jumps down on the lawn  
With noiseless stealth, looks about again,  
Then up the ivy, through the curtained window  
Enters the house. The minutes pass by.

Outside a night-bird swiftly flies,  
A sleeping wren becomes its prey,  
And screeching, struggling lies dead in its nest.  
On what note of tragedy the life-drama ends!—  
The comfort of the nest being a nightmare of death

Silence all around, the pale stars peep.  
A dog in the street wakes up and wails,  
As if to lament a sorrowful deed,  
Then quietly again goes back to sleep.

Hark! is it a muffled cry of pain?  
A groan, or is it just the wind  
Howling through the trees, rustling the leaves?  
What goes on there in that bleak little house?  
The night holds its secrets which the day might reveal ..

D. L.

## “SRI AUROBINDO”

### MY INTIMACY WITH THE VAST UNKNOWN

FROM my early youth I was always fond of visiting new places. Gradually this desire took a turn towards the vast beauty of Nature. Sometime in the beginning of the year 1995 I had planned to go to the Himalayas. I tried steadily to make all arrangements to start in the middle of the year, but I was not sure about many things till the end. First, whether I should go out of Pondicherry for a period of 2 months for my own pleasure. Secondly, whether God would give consent for my trip. Thirdly, taking into account the risk of travelling alone in the region of the Himalayas whether God would approve of it. Finally, there was the question of monetary arrangement for the trip. I was waiting for a reply to all these queries within myself. According to my own ideas and decisions things did not go in a positive way. So a few days before my final preparation for the trip I introspected thoroughly the exigency and possibility of my trip and when I found nothing was moving in a positive direction I dropped the idea of going. For a while I developed some sort of *abhuman* with God with the grievance that if He did not want it how would I go? So now it was one hundred percent sure that I would not start unless and until He said “yes”. I didn’t know what way He would convey the message to me. But I was depending only on Him. Besides, why would He bother about a little fellow like me? Of course, after that I was a little sad but I forgot about it, leaving the matter absolutely to Him.

To my utter surprise God’s mercy was showered on me on the evening of the very same day. I came to know from an earthly messenger of His that He was in favour of my travel and wanted me to get Ananda from it. By the way, He also arranged the necessary means in such a way that my hurdles for the trip cleared step by step.

On the trip-day I went to Sri Aurobindo’s room and prayed to Him to be with me all the time during my trip. I felt that He consented to be with me, and so my journey started slowly, steadily, and happily in a well-arranged way.

I had a plan to go to Agra (for the Tajmahal), Mathura, Brindaban, Delhi, Nainital, Almora, Ranikhet, Kousani, Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, Gomukh, Yamunotri, etc. But at the very beginning of the trip I was always looking for one thing: that is, what sort of Ananda the Lord wanted me to have from this trip to the Himalayas. I was perplexed as to whether it would be the Ananda merely of the thrill of travel or something unexpected, invisible, from a deeper level, or whether in the Himalayas amid the exceptional beauty of Nature He would reveal something. For long before this Himalayas-trip I had always been praying to God, “Lord, you hold my hand and show me your beautiful creations.” I was so keen to see this creation that I was almost in a thoughtful mood, wondering when I would reach the Himalayas. And it was also a pleasure



for me to think that God wanted me to have Ananda. It did not take long to attain it.

I got down at Agra according to the scheduled programme. I booked a room in a hotel and started for the Agra Fort and the Tajmahal. Although the heat was intolerable the sky was crystal-clear and the weather invariably bright. I saw the Tajmahal as a vast magnanimous structure, a monument of great artistic beauty offered by mankind to the Infinite under the charming blue sky and the ardent sunlight by the side of the river Yamuna. Its magnificent presence was the silent witness and symbol of a deep conjugal love, its beauty was magnified like a fairy princess radiating her sparkling love continuously to the world.

It was indeed very tiring to move in Agra in the scorching sun. I decided to go back the same evening to Brindaban, because I had read a lot from the *Bhagavat* about Krishna's *lila*. So I was very keen to spend some time at Brindaban. But I came to know that there was no direct communication to Brindaban from Agra. One has to go through Mathura, and when I arrived at Mathura, it was already 9 o'clock in the evening. I had with me a few addresses of Sri Aurobindo Society Centres from which I could get the location of the Mathura Centre. In my transitional halt at Mathura I thought before starting for Brindaban: why not enquire from the people at the Sri Aurobindo Society Centre about Brindaban? They might guide me in the right way. After all, they are devotees of Sri Aurobindo, and people of our own country. The Sri Aurobindo Society Centre is known there as 'Amarnath Vidya Ashram'. When I reached it I found it was a big school with tight security arrangement at the entrance. I gave the security-person my visiting card and enquired whether the chief of the organisation Mr Anand Mohan Vajpayee was available. The watchman said he was out of station, but his younger brother Lalit Mohan Vajpayee was available. I told the watchman: "Will you please inform him that I have come from the Pondicherry Ashram?" The watchman went inside to tell him. I was waiting in the verandah adjoining the school's administrative office. The school had a big campus, a well-maintained lawn surrounded by buildings, in which imposing portraits of great Indians made the environment ideal. Observing the status of the school I drew the conclusion that the people in charge must be very big persons. So I thought I would just ask them about Brindaban and immediately start for it, for usually I am not fond of keeping intimacy with well-known popular persons of society. In the meanwhile half an hour had passed. I was thinking, "How shall I start for Brindaban at this late hour?" In fact I had no interest to stay at Mathura, because Mathura was Kansa's ruling place, his kingdom, and I had heard from people that Mathura was now known as a business centre and there was nothing significant to see. In the meantime I found Lalit Mohan (an elderly man) coming towards me and behind him a man was carrying a tray. He received me very warmly and talked very cordially. Since I was from the Pondicherry Ashram, he was very much interested. But at the

very beginning I enquired of him why the school name was 'Amarnath Vidya Ashram' and whether the authorities running the school and the Centres were well-connected with the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's work. He declared that they had been connected with the Pondicherry Ashram for a long time. Then at the very first instance I wanted to make it clear to him that I had had no plan to meet him and it was by chance I had come here. Then I mentioned that since it was on the way to Brindaban, I had thought, why not take some guidance from him about my stay at Brindaban. The moment he came to know this he said, "All arrangements for your trip to Brindaban will be made by us easily tomorrow morning. Today why not take rest here comfortably?" According to his instructions one of their office workers accompanied us to their dining room and served us nice food. At that time one of my friends who had accompanied me from the Ashram was there with me. When I saw the school discipline, I was taken aback by their attempt to implement many things of our own dining and boarding system. Most of the persons who were serving us were also from Orissa. After dining when I came back for rest, I found that Mr. Anand Mohan Bajpayee, the chief Member of the institution, had come back and was waiting for me. He had just arrived from Brindaban, late at night. We had some talk about the Ashram and also the history of that school 'Amarnath Vidya Ashram'. Finally he made all suitable arrangements for our comfortable stay, which I had never expected. It was a warm summer night but due to their hospitality I could retire to bed very comfortably.

In the morning when I got up I was feeling very fresh. While talking with the authorities after breakfast it suddenly flashed in my mind that I had had a fine dream in the night. I tried to recall the dream. I remembered that someone in the depth of the dark and solitary night had held a big volume which contained the record of previous births. The book was kept wide open and he was running his eye down the pages of my previous births. At that time I was curious about it. Someone from the background was prompting as if I were related to Mathura and Lord Krishna in some of my previous births. But since the picture was not very clear in my mind, I did not give much importance to it. I was more interested in my trip to Brindaban. One of the teachers of the school came and informed me that their own autorickshaw was ready and that at first we should pay a visit to Krishna's Janmasthan—Mathura Temple—for a while. They told me that it was nearby and it would take hardly ten minutes to visit it. I also thought that we would come back quickly from the Mathura Temple and start for Brindaban. Reaching there I found that it was one of the constructions like Babri Masjid which were in dispute due to the communal disharmony in the name of religion.

Then I entered the temple slowly with deep devotion. At its entrance I collected some flowers for Lord Krishna. When I had my first glance at Krishna and Radha inside the temple it was such a living picture that I was bewitched by

the wonderful presence of the dual idol. I had never seen in my life such a beautiful face of Lord Krishna. The background scenery was Latakunj, the jungle with everflowing streams and exquisite birds on the branches of the luxuriant trees. It was a very lonely place in the deep forest. It was so charming to see the lovely face of Lord Krishna there that I could not turn my face anywhere else. Like a magnetic pull my attention was in-drawn to Him. My emotion overflowed to Him and the background of Nature which was still carrying the silent past, and at the very first glance my eyes were fixed on Him. I was not interested to turn them anywhere else. A sort of deep cry from within me came out to see Him as He had revealed Himself physically and intimately thousands of years ago when He was at His play in the earth-field. The more I looked at Him the more I found myself interested to watch Him. I had no thought even to give Him puja. I was in love with thinking about Him so intensely that I was glad I had a profound Ananda from someone who was so near and dear to me. When I was thinking, my eyes were filled with tears. I was thinking only about His presence, which was carrying me to that golden past thousands of years ago! What a solitude! How intimate He was with His playmates! The more I thought along this line my Ananda multiplied. My whole attention was fixed on Him so intently that it was as if He was really standing before me. But it was all feeling. There was no vision. After a long time of remaining in that ecstatic condition I tried to offer my flowers to the Lord along with Dakshina to the priest. My pranam brought an absolute yearning to live united with Him forever. Then, when I took *charanamrita*, it was ecstasy to me. It had such a sweetness that I thought whether I could have a full glass of it! I was so enchanted with the sight of Krishna that I did not want at all to turn my face to anything other than Him. I wanted to remain there as long as possible and to continue that feeling indefinitely because it was such a moment of Ananda that I did not know when it would come again in my life. The most precious of the precious, as if the total secret of life was yielding its full charm in this unforgettable hour.

After a while I went inside the temple to see the other presiding deities. But within my heart I was in deep love with the supreme God Lord Krishna. My eyes were still fixed on Krishna's Idols where He stood in the deep forest in solitude with His ever-beloved Sri Radha. The only presences witnessing their celestial love were the beautiful birds and the evergreen plants of the dense forest, and the slow-moving fountain and its gurgling sound in the profound silence of the jungle.

Then I went to see an adjacent temple connected with Krishna's birth-place, the prison of King Kansa. It was a dark house with dim light. Here the sitting space was not enough but even then a few could sit. I went inside the prison. The uninterrupted chanting of Krishna's name by one or two priests was going on. Again I got a deep touch of love from within. I spent some time in meditation by

keeping my eyes closed. It was as if a state of mute trance and an opportunity to muse with deep love for Him. One felt as if the place carried the very atmosphere and vibration of the days of His play in Mathura.

After some time I went from there to another adjacent temple named Keshavji temple. I saw there Sri Chaitanya's picture. My devotion multiplied when I realised that he had come with his disciples to this place, doing Nagar-Kirtan and chanting the sweet name of Krishna. I felt a joyous urge to sing also. When I saw the small image of Krishna carved out of glistening marble I was indrawn for some time again more intensely than before. I was beholding His lovely sweet face constantly. It was a joy to hold His face in my earthly eyes and feel His deep enchanting love in the depth of my heart. I felt a tremendous joy of union with Him. It was an overflowing joy to remain in that union and never to separate from Him. I was continuously drinking the wine of His intoxicating love. Whenever I raised my eyes to my beloved Sri Chaitanya's picture I was able to understand how he had come here to revive the eternal love of Krishna and identify the birthplace of the Lord. I was thinking, "Oh! How marvellous it is that a few thousand years ago Krishna with His playmates might have come many times to the place where I am standing now." I was lost absolutely in the sense of those past moments. The more I was involved myself the more intimacy I enjoyed with Sri Krishna. For a while I did not think that I had to leave this temple. I had forgotten that I had come only for a 10 minutes' visit and that I had to go after this to Brindaban. But still then it was terrible to think that I would have to depart from Krishna for the moment. But I was quite happy with that visit to the Mathura Temple. I was thinking of staying as long as possible inside the temple to enjoy the ecstatic thought of Lord Krishna. But it was not allowed, I was being called by my host immediately as they had been waiting for us for a long time and it was already late for Brindaban. But when I came back they could understand from my face that I had been definitely lost in something extraordinarily beautiful. Then our trip was arranged for Brindaban in the afternoon of the same day. Although in Brindaban in almost all temples I tried to find some sense of the ancient place where still Sri Krishna's footprints would be found, to give the touch of His golden play of that past age, but it was already late in the evening, and I could not visit Nidhikunj even. I returned with a broken heart to Mathura the same night, having failed to feel anything at my much desired place, Brindaban.

I planned in the night, that before boarding the train for Delhi I would go once again to the Mathura temple. I did so in the morning. As an addicted person moves towards the wineshop, I was drawn to the temple by a magnetic love. In my deep love I offered Lord Krishna the most fragrant jasmine garland available, in the same temple where our first intimacy had taken place. I was eager to meet my most beloved face before departing. I was coming back from the temple to go towards the station by the same auto provided by my noble host. But I felt as if I were being pulled from behind and I were leaving my own,

my nearest and dearest, my eternally close friend, and my true native place. There was hardly any time to stop there, to prolong my stay. But even then it gave more intensity to my enjoyment. I reached the station. I waited for the train, wondering why I was feeling so much pain to leave this place. In the thirty years of my life, I had never come to this place or ever heard anything about it. It was the very first time in this life I had come here and that too just for a casual visit on the way to Delhi. What was there that enticed me with such a love, with such a strong feeling? I have seen so many villages and towns and spent in them many days also. But what was there in this place that within a span of 34 hours I had got such a tremendous love for it, that I had developed an attachment as of a long-time association? The word ‘Mathura’ put a deep impression in my heart.

The train arrived a little late at Mathura Station and I left for Delhi. I was sitting by the window facing east and watching Mathura from there. From that time, to me Mathura was no more a town, no more a business centre, no more a thick traffic area or a densely populated place. When I was watching Mathura from the window of the slow-running train I felt as if it was a village, where there were no buildings, no rush, no pollution, but a quiet remote village full with the beauty of Nature, with lovely shadowy paths covered by the tall green trees. When I saw the straw heaps piled by the villagers, I felt floating before my eyes the scene of my beloved Krishna playing in the grazing field with his lovely companions. And I did not know whether I was moving with Him as one of his playmates or just watching the scene. I was absolutely engrossed with the thought of Him and feeling a close union with Him. For a few moments I became conscious and offered my gratitude to Sri Aurobindo for having given me the opportunity to get such a feeling of intimacy and deep love for Lord Krishna, the ineffable, *the vast unknown*. I was feeling such a joy in His love that I was praying constantly, “Lord, don’t be separated from me. Don’t leave me alone. I want to be always with you with this deep constant touch. After a long time in my life I have got a perfect pleasure, a deep bliss from which I never want any more to detach myself at all.” I was so engrossed in these thoughts of union with Krishna that my intimacy with Him made me cry. Tears were rolling down from my eyes. I was not able to stop them because I was feeling, “Without your intimacy and love my life will be miserable. So please do not be away from me hereafter. Always be with me with your sweet disposition, with this intimate love and friendship and union.” I knew that I was sitting in the train, other passengers were with me, but I was with a heart full of Ananda, praying, “O! Lord, never deprive me of this union and joy with You.” Since tears of deep love were coming out from my eyes I was not able to turn my face towards the passengers. I was deepening my thought of Him because I knew these were the most valuable moments of my life. But my earthly friends deprived me of this heavenly friend’s thought after a while. I have been waiting since then, wondering when this marvellous opportunity will come again in my life?

# THE BOOK OF JOB

## A NEW COMMENTARY

(Continued from the issue of July 1995)

*Verses 13 to 19.*

Though Job addressed his friends in the verses he no longer talked about them as he had done till now. After asking them to be silent and allow him to speak out irrespective of consequences, he expressed his own attitude as he was about to address God.

*Verse 13.*

Job asked the friends to hold their peace, to be silent and not to come out with their harangues as he was about to talk to God directly. He would do so in spite of whatever might happen to him.

*Verse 14*

The AV reads:

Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my hand?

The RSV omits the first word and the interrogation. Job was merely asking himself why he was taking the risk. Commentators find parallels to the second image (*put my life. .*) in the other books of the Old Testament but none for the first. Clines<sup>183</sup> says that putting one's life in one's hands is a risky business. The first expression, he avers, must have an identical meaning with "flesh" parallel to "life" and with "teeth" to "hands" The first expression conjures up before us an animal's gesture parallel to the human one of the second expression. The second expression indicates that life is no longer safe within oneself but has come out to be held by the hand with the risk of being lost. Strangely, there is a parallel expression in Telugu, a South Indian tongue with no relationship whatever with Hebrew: *pidiketilo prānam pettukoni*, holding one's life in one's fist

*Verse 15.*

This is one of the most problematic verses to the exegetes and commentators.

The AV has,

Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; but I will maintain my own ways before him

The RSV makes Job say that God would slay him and that he had no hope. Yet

he would defend his ways to his (God's) face.

With the exception of Anderson<sup>184</sup> who is often perceptive, the commentators displaying their knowledge of Hebrew and the different versions assert that Job could not have spoken the words of strong faith attributed to him in the AV. The commentators forget that the words are consistent with Job's certainty about God punishing the friends if they bore false witness in the litigation he was to have against God. Also, in the same verse he asserts,

but I will maintain my own ways before him.

The words make it clear that his arguments against God, his condemnation of him are not inconsistent with his faith. Moreover, Job, we should never forget for a moment, was undergoing a tremendous torture, both physical and psychological. The friends tormented him with accusations when poor Job was at a loss to know why he had to suffer his losses and unbearable physical pain.

As has been pointed out in these pages from the start, Job, during the course of his arguments was moving from one psychological state to another, —unconsciously becoming ready to go beyond the states *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva* to the soul-state where he could have a vision of the Lord. The movement from one state to another obviously produced a condition of conflict and the conflict continued till the very end.

Kathleen Raine<sup>185</sup> brings it out in her remarks on Plate 10 in Blake's engravings on Job referred to earlier (*vide* comment on 12:4). As we noted, the engravings were accompanied by the artist's own quotations from the different portions of the Book. Just below the picture we have in bold letters what forms the immediate subject of the picture:

The Just Upright Man is laughed to scorn...

Above the picture there are three quotations:

But he knoweth the way that I take. when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold (23:10).

Have pity upon me, have pity on me, O ye friends; for the hand of God hath touched me (19:21).

Though he slay me, yet will I trust him (the verse under discussion).

And below are quoted the first three verses of Chapter 14 beginning with the well-known words,

Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble...

Miss Raine comments,

So we see Job torn between the despair of mortality expressed in the text below and hope in the God he has not yet seen but in whom he nevertheless trusts "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

In the parlance we have been using, Job despaired when he sank into *tamas* and hoped when he touched the mental faith of the *sattva guna*.

*Verse 16*

In the same psychological state (that of the previous verse) he said that God whom he trusted would be his salvation. He was sure hypocrites would never come before him. Job was sure he was no hypocrite.

Commentators who dismiss the AV of the previous verse cannot understand the propriety of the word "salvation" in this verse. Clines,<sup>186</sup> for example, gives an ingenious explanation of the word:

The "salvation" would consist in what is affirmed in the second half of the line. An evil person would not easily approach God. Job's boldness would argue his innocence.

Clines is thinking of Job's boldness in approaching God for litigation. Earlier commentators interpret the word in similar terms.

*Verses 17 and 18.*

Job asked his friends to diligently hear his speech, to take in their ears what he would declare. He drew their particular attention by the word "Behold" to the fact of having ordered his cause. He expressed his strong optimism that he would be justified (or "vindicated" in the RSV rendering)

Terrien<sup>187</sup> is wiser than he knows when he comments,

*I know that I shall be vindicated* sums up the spiritual development which Job has reached at the end of the first cycle of discussion.

The development consists in more than his being certain, as Terrien says, that he will be proclaimed innocent at the end. The certainty itself rises from his touching a higher state of consciousness than the mere *tamasic* state to which he had sunk in the silence of the seven days when he sat with his friends who had just come to console him.

*Verse 19.*

The AV is very clear in its import:



Who is he that will plead with me? for now, if I hold my tongue, I shall give up my ghost.

The first part of the verse is a formal way of calling upon the person he has to contend with to appear before him. Job wanted the person (God) to appear because if he did not speak out and present his case he should die

The RV and the commentators in trying to give a “closer” rendering of the original create problems of interpretation. The RV substituting *contend* for *plead* in the first half of the verse makes the second half appear unconnected with the first:

For then I would be silent and die.

The commentators follow the RSV with slight variations. How far the ingenuity of the commentators could go is seen in Gordis, a Jewish exegete, attributing the first half to God and the second half to Job

Marvin Pope<sup>188</sup> says of the second half of the verse:

The exact impact of the line is uncertain. It has usually been taken to mean that if his guilt were proved in a fair trial, he would be content to accept the verdict and expire in silent resignation.

Habel<sup>189</sup> comments:

If his opponent accepts the challenge and appears in court, Job is ready to listen to the case he presents or, if a God descend in his full fury, to die in the effort.

Hartley<sup>190</sup> commenting on the whole verse says

Sure of the outcome of the trial, Job asks rhetorically, *Who is X who can dispute with me?* “No one, not even God”, is the implied response.. Paradoxically he conceded that if someone, i.e., God should counter his defence, he would be silent and expire. He is aware of the consequences should he fail to persuade the court. His boldness is lined with fear and trembling.

The boldness of commentators in interpreting as they like without a warrant in the text is not linked with any hesitation or a slight suspicion that they are going too far! Clines<sup>191</sup> agrees with the rest in his interpretation of the whole verse. The AV is in perfect tune with what has gone before and what follows. It (the AV) is not so much a translation as a perceptive interpretation

*Verses 20 to 28*

In the verses Job directly addressed God. After asking God not to terrify him any longer or torment him with physical suffering, Job, far from accusing him of cruelty or the like, asked him what sins he had committed to deserve his present suffering.

*Verses 20 and 21.*

Job wanted only two things from God before he could bare<sup>191</sup> his heart before him—first to withdraw his hand far from him and not to terrify him with his dread

It may be recalled that in 9.34-5 Job spoke in similar terms:

Let him take away his rod from me and let not his fear terrify me  
Then would I speak...

In the earlier passage he used the word *rod* instead of *hand*. For the significance of the word *hand*, *vide* comment on 12:9-quotation from Habel.

Commenting on the present passage Clines<sup>192</sup> points out that what Job asked for was not the removal of the present suffering but the safe conduct of the disputation without recriminations after the case was over. But the word “withdraw” like “take away” of the earlier passage, points to the need for the kindred of the present suffering.

*Verse 22*

Without the “numinous terror” (*vide* comment on verse 11 above) of God during the trial and with the removal of his sufferings Job is ready to answer if God called upon him to do so or present his case if God would answer him. Clines<sup>193</sup> remarks that it did not make much difference, legally speaking, in such a dispute, who was the plaintiff and who was the defendant. Perhaps, in spite of the legal imagery, Job was particular that he must directly know from God the real cause of his suffering. His desire to meet God, see him face to face, was expressing itself in different forms.

*Verses 23 to 28.*

That becomes obvious in verse 24 in which he asked God why he was hiding his face from him treating him as an enemy (*Vide* footnote on verse 20.) Job knew that he was not an enemy of God. In verse 23, instead of accusing God, he asked him what his own wickednesses and sins were and what were his transgressions. In pathetic language, which smacks a little of legal formality, he asked God if he would first break a live leaf and then continue to pursue it after it became stubble. Job was profoundly affected by God’s first inflicting suffering on him and then continuing his hostile attitude. Hebraists point out the pun on

his own name while his asking him if he were his enemy: the original form of Job (Iob) and the Hebrew word for enemy are cognate terms. It must be noted that Job revealed himself throughout the discussion as a very intelligent person with a perfect command over what he had to say and how best he could say it.

Continuing his complaint Job stated that God “wrote bitter things against him” and made it appear as though he possessed now the iniquities of his youth. An earlier commentator notes that in Hebrew “write against” implies “make one inherit”, “the assignment of property to an heir”. What is implied is that God made it appear that he had “inherited the iniquities of his youth”. That accounts for the RSV and other modern versions substituting “inherit” for “possess” of the AV.

As Job continued in his mood of complaint he gradually slipped into the *tamasic* state and talked of God putting him to public ridicule. He told God that he put his feet in the stocks, and watched his steps, God even stained his feet with an intention of noting which side he moved by seeing the marks the feet left on the way.

In the final verse Job referred to himself in the third person, *he*, seeing himself as the representative of all men. RSV rendered “he” as “Man” for that reason. He, as a rotten thing, wasted away like a moth-eaten garment.

It is this state of consciousness that continues into the next chapter. Passing from one psychological state to another continued with Job till the last. It only helped him to grow inwardly and become ready for the final experience

*(To be continued)*

K. B. SITARAMAYYA

*Notes*

- 183 Clines, p 311
- 184 Anderson, p 167
- 185 Raine, p 93
- 186 Clines, p 314
- 187 Terrien, p 1006
- 188 Pope, p 96
- 189 Habel, p 211
- 190 Hartley, p 225
- 191 Job's words are “I will not hide myself from thee ” The question of Job's hiding himself did not arise. Job felt it was God who was hiding himself. *Vide* vs 24
- 192 Clines, p 315
- 193 *Ibid*

## A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS

### 81. THE BONDSLAVE

IN the temple city of Thirunavalur, a brahmin couple named Sadayanar and Isai Jnaniar gave birth to a beautiful boy child and named him Nambi Aruran.

Nambi was still a toddler when he attracted the attention of King Narasinga Munayarayar. During one of his regular visits to the cities that were under his jurisdiction, the king was surprised to find himself brimming with love at the very sight of the child. He cuddled the child, showered kisses on his cheeks and talked sweetly to him.

The child smiled and prattled, which pleased the king immensely.

The king met the child's parents and requested them to allow him to bring up the child in his palace.

The parents readily agreed. The king renamed him Sundaram, meaning the Beautiful One.

Sundaram grew to be a lad well-versed not only in the mantras and the rituals that befit a brahmin but also in the arts and the sciences that befit a prince.

The king arranged the marriage of his adopted son.

Sundaram sat on the dais in the marriage hall. He was well-groomed for the occasion and awaited the arrival of his bride.

Pipers played sweetly on their pipes and the drummers beat their instruments to the accompaniment of the clashing of cymbals. The music of the orchestra invoked the blessings of the Divine.

Beautifully dressed in a gorgeous silk sari and adorned with gold ornaments, the bride was led to the dais to be seated beside the groom.

The gathering looked at the couple happily.

Sundaram, as his name signifies, was beautiful beyond any comparison. Many a woman in the gathering admired him, some others devoured him with their looks and a few others became jealous of the bride. And the men heartily congratulated Sadankaviyar for choosing such a handsome young fellow as his daughter's life-partner

The brahmin priest sat near the couple and began to perform the marriage ceremonies.

"Stop it." A voice came from the gathering.

The brahmin was dumbfounded. Everyone's eyes searched for the one who had uttered it.

A ripe old man with a staff plodded his way towards the dais. Holy ash covered his forehead and parts of his hands and chest. The long white matted hair sat up like a crown on his head. The tip of his beard touched his navel. He wore a *dhoti*, but his chest was bare.

Sundaram rose to his feet at the sight of the old man.

“How dare you?” howled the old man at the bridegroom. “You are my bondslave and you have no right to marry without my prior permission, according to the bond executed by your grandfather. And so I object to your marriage.”

“No! You can’t,” retorted Sundaram.

“I say, Yes You have no right to shout back at me Do not forget that you are a bondslave. Here is the evidence.” So saying the old man produced a palm leaf.

“You must be mad to say this,” said Sundaram and plucked the palm leaf from the old man’s hands and tore it into shreds.

“The original is still with me. You tore only a copy of it,” heckled the old man.

Irritated, a few wedding guests rose up and asked the old man, “Who are you?”

“All of you know me and do not know me.”

“Where are you from?”

“From the topmost part of the world.”

The guests began to whisper to each other: “This old man is cranky. His words are puzzling.”

“Come with me to ThiruvennaiNallur and we shall settle my matter in consultation with the assembly of learned men there,” said the old man.

Then he trudged his way out of the marriage hall. Sundaram and others followed him.

The assembly of learned men listened to the old man’s plea, read the palm-leaf he had produced before them. They then unanimously declared. “There is no reason to doubt the veracity of the evidence produced by this old man And so Sundaram is adjudged a hereditary bondman to the old man ”

The old man laughed to his heart’s content and said to Sundaram: “Now all that you can do is to follow me and be my slave. You can’t get married till I grant you permission And I know when to grant it.”

As if spellbound, Sundaram followed the old man who entered the temple and merged with the idol of Lord Siva.

Thrilled beyond words, Sundaram became an ardent devotee of Lord Siva and began to sing in praise of Him. Like his predecessors, Thirunavukkarasar and Sambandar, he sang his hymns for the common man and wandered from place to place.

*(More legends on the way)*

P. RAJA

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**The Ancient Tale of Savitri**, by *R. Y. Deshpande*, published by Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, 1995. Price Rs. 40/-.

THE main text of this booklet was first published in *Mother India* in 1988 and 1989

With the author's scholarly introduction, it is based essentially on an episode that appears in seven sections in the Book of the Forest of Vyasa's epic *Mahabharata*

The author has quoted the story of Savitri in 15 appropriate shlokas out of the original 300 by Vyasa

Here is a very impressive study. The delineation of Savitri's character brings out the splendour of the boon of the Supreme Goddess Savitri to Aswapati, King of Madra, who was without any issue

The tale begins with the consoling narration by Markandeya to the exiled Yudhishtira. The Rishi inspired Yudhishtira to overcome his plight of melancholy due to Draupadi having suffered and been harassed by the Kurus. He gave the example of Savitri. But Savitri, the pious and devoted wife, not only saved her husband from doom but also brought prosperity to both the families (her husband's as well as her father's). Markandeya assured the distressed Yudhishtira that, like Savitri, Draupadi would be the 'fortune-bringer' for the Pandavas.

The famous tale begins with Aswapati's tapasya offered to Goddess Savitri in order to have a child.

The noble and virtuous King performed all kinds of austerities, and *Savitri Yajna* for eighteen years in order that Brahma should be pleased and grant him a child to uphold his lineage. After eighteen years the Goddess Savitri issued forth from the sacrificial flames and promised the King that a radiantly spiritual daughter would spring from her. The child was born and named Savitri. She grew up like the 'Goddess of Beauty' herself in embodied form and was blessed with divine qualities. When she reached maturity, kings and princes overwhelmed by her divine character, dared not ask for her hand. So her father was pained and sent her forth to seek out a spouse of her own choice. Her heart found Satyavan, the faithful son of Raja Dyumatsena, a blind and exiled king who lived in a forest hermitage.

When Savitri came back to disclose to her father her choice, she found him in conversation with Narad, the great heavenly Sage. When Narad heard Savitri's words he warned that Satyavan, though endowed with all high qualities and with honour constant as the Pole Star, was destined to die in a year. The father tried to persuade his daughter to choose another, but in vain.

The author has very poignantly revealed the character of Savitri: once for all

she had made her choice of marrying Satyavan. She argued: "Only once can a father give his daughter in marriage and not again. It mattered not for her if Satyavan had a long life or short, whether he had virtuous qualities or was without them, because only once would she make her choice." It was by the power of love that her soul had come forth as her nature was ready to accept it as a luminous and infallible guide. She was "driven from within". The author tries to show the true perception in Savitri's choice which is upholding the Dharma. He sees that the cosmic riddle is interlocked with Savitri as her own, and she has taken up the gauntlet of solving that riddle. The author narrates. "Narad saw in Savitri a firm and fine unperturbed discernment." So Narad advised Aswapati to accept his daughter's proposal. The Princess was married and lived a simple quiet life in the forest. She pleased all, with her tender services, self-denial, evenness of temper, her skill and gentle speech and her love for Satyavan.

But night and day Narad's prophetic words were present in her mind. She spoke of them to no one. When the appointed day for Satyavan's death approached, Savitri fasted and prayed. On the fated day she sought permission from her husband's parents to follow her husband into the forest in order to see again the blossoming woods through which he had passed daily. She was dissuaded by her parents-in-law, because she was weak and feeble, having resorted to a complete fast for the preceding three days standing at one place. At last her request was granted.

She accompanied Satyavan. After a few hours, Satyavan fell down, smitten with pain. Savitri put his head in her lap. Suddenly she saw Yama, the God of death, standing before her with a noose in his hand. She rose dauntlessly and asked why he had come himself instead of sending one of his emissaries as was his custom. The author has brought out lucidly the reason.

"Yama explained to Savitri that Satyavan's was a virtuous soul with fine and beautiful features and that it was an ocean of noble qualities: as such, his deputies would not have been able to seize or snatch it."

Then Yama took the soul of Satyavan and proceeded Southward. Savitri boldly followed him. Time and again Yama turned to stop her, but with wise and appealing words she moved him to grant one boon after another, except the life of Satyavan. Finally her devotion and unparalleled love and wisdom moved Yama to return Satyavan's soul. Savitri hastened to the woods where her lord's body lay and wooed the soul back into it and together they returned to their home and found that all the boons she had asked for Satyavan's parents had been granted and fulfilled.

This booklet *The Tale of Savitri* has kept almost intact in its story-part the old legend. The story is narrated as a symbol and has heightened the Indian myth and turned it full of significance for the human soul and its destiny. The originality of the author, Mr. Deshpande, can be observed in his Aurobindonian interpretation, which converts a local legend into a tremendous psychological

fact, full of significance for human evolution.

In his chapter "Message" he portrays an ideal of manhood, the divine beauty of virtue and the ethical order, a civilisation founded on the *Dharma*. The author has shown a panoramic vision of the character of Savitri. "Yudhishtira enquires of Markandeya whether he had met or heard of any woman who, despite being chaste and virtuous, had to bear wounds the way Draupadi did." The Rishi narrates the story of Savitri not only to provide a parallel. He also pronounces the ideal of womanhood and elaborates further how conduct in the *Dharma* can be a means of proper salvation. "In all the circumstances of life, virtue never goes unrewarded."

The author proves that it is something more than a significant tale. He makes it representative throughout of the central ideals of Indian life and culture. Mr. Deshpande illustrates this fact in the following words: "A whole culture, based on truth-values, and on the two interpenetrating each other, is what this little episode brings vividly to us from a time that itself was moulded by the thought-vision of a Rishi-Poet. A kind of heroism emerges in upholding all that is noble and elevating, a heroism that brings prosperity not only in life here in this world but afterwards beyond too. Righteous conduct turns out to be its own reward."

Throughout the episode the author presents the law of Dharma in everyday life like 'the marriage proposal', or 'the coronation ceremony' or 'the funeral rites'. All have to be conducted according to prescribed norms that have been evolved by the learned Brahmins and sages with fulfilled souls. Even in any problem that came to persons in daily life, the sages advised and solaced them. When worried Dyumatsena goes like a mad person to many sages to inquire about his son Satyavan to know his fate.

"The Brahmins of the Ashram, speakers of the Truth-Word, console him in various ways. Thus Suvarchas tells him:

"His wife Savitri, I know, is engaged in tapasya and has control over the senses and is of a good well-poised conduct, from that I can proclaim that Satyavan is alive."

Similarly, Gautama asserts.

"I have studied the Vedas and all their six limbs, accumulated great might of askesis, observed the strictest celibacy from my early youth, and pleased well my preceptors and the Fire-God. I have with the power of concentration completed all the vows and in former times I had observed meticulously the fasting rites by nourishing myself with the air only. I can, by the strength of these austerities, know all the movements of others; believe, therefore, in my words that Satyavan is living."

About the Savitri-tale Sri Aurobindo has written:

"The tale of Satyavan and Savitri is recited in the Mahabharata as a story of



conjugal love conquering death. But the legend is, as shown by many features of the human tale, one of the many symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle. Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance; Savitri is the Divine Word, daughter of the Sun, goddess of the supreme Truth who comes down and is born to save, Aswapati, the Lord of the Horse, her human father, is the Lord of Tapasya, the concentrated energy of spiritual endeavour that helps us to rise from the mortal to immortal planes; Dyumatsena, Lord of the Shining Hosts, father of Satyavan, is the Divine Mind here fallen blind, losing its celestial kingdom of vision, and through that loss its kingdom of glory. Still this is not a mere allegory, the characters are not personified qualities, but incarnations or emanations of living and conscious Forces with whom we can enter into concrete touch and they take human bodies in order to help man and show him the way from his mortal state to a divine consciousness and immortal life."

Mr. Deshpande's penetrating mind has probed into the matter deeply and he explains it thus: "Tradition handed down to Vyasa the symbolic myth of the Vedic cycle and he recreated it in the sublimity and splendour of his spiritual attainments; the creation itself has the beauty and form of the damsel of heaven, *devarupini*, to use Vyasa's own epithet for Savitri."

The author has not been satisfied with mere narration of the story, but his intellectual study of the Mahabharata has drawn him to show the greatness of Vyasa. He says about Vyasa: "He is austere in purity of the artistic taste and there is a complete wholesomeness in its self-sufficient and exact delineation. Vyasa is too precise a writer to be paraphrased hurriedly. It is a 'maturer and nobler work, perfect and restrained in details'."

The tale of Savitri is a fresh story though it describes from generation to generation an aspect of the spiritual inner life of the Indian society and culture. It is not a religious story. It is basically a spiritual symbol renewed periodically by the Rishis. It is a powerful spiritual legend and symbol bearing the weight of spiritual experiences and attainments

Mr. Deshpande has brought out the inner shades of the story and its multifold imperatives. So the reader will be encouraged by the story and relive the glorious past of Indian culture.

NILIMA DAS

## *Students' Section*

### THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Thirty-second Annual Conference

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#### THE NEXT MIRACLE

Speech by Menaka Gupta

THE face of our earth has been changing ever since it was created and every day we hear of new horizons, new breakthroughs, new miracles occur. But what seems to me the biggest of all miracles in its most stupendous sense is the emergence of life from inanimate matter. When I think of the appearance of the first quiver of life in the static, inert and gross lifelessness of matter, I am left awe-struck. Isn't it ironical that science can elongate life, shorten life, relieve life of its sufferings—science can alter life in so many ways, but it cannot create life? In today's world which is bubbling with a multitude of life-forms and activities, it is so difficult to imagine what it was like billions of years ago when even the notion of life was inconceivable. But the miracle of life did take place and we human beings claim to be its finest product. Our present state of existence is taken so much for granted that we have become short-sighted. We don't realise that there is nothing to stop a further miracle from happening, that once again the face of earth will undergo a giant change.

In my quest to know more about the nature of this next miracle which is still to come, some of my questions were answered by what Sri Aurobindo has written on evolution.

My first question was. Are we here to experience only a physical life-evolution? To this Sri Aurobindo says there is "an evolutionary urge, an evolutionary fact, a ladder of ascension somewhere from an original apparent Inconscience to a more and more developed consciousness..."<sup>1</sup>

If so, what is the purpose, the sense, the fundamental principle of this development? To this Sri Aurobindo says: "Everything seems to point to such a progression as a fact—to a spiritual and not merely a physical evolution."<sup>2</sup>

Thus I was led to think that the Hindu procession of the ten Avatars would not be totally significant were it not connected with the theory of evolution. From the Fish Avatar to the Tortoise Avatar and to the Man-Lion Avatar and thence to Krishna, Buddha and Kalki Avatars, this represents the development of outward form as well as the inner consciousness.

What I also wonder sometimes about is Do modern scientific theories of physical evolution and spiritual evolution go hand in hand? Here Sri Aurobindo answers: "The scientific theory is concerned only with the outward and visible machinery and process, with the detail of Nature's execution, with.. the law of development of life and mind in Matter; its account of the process may have to be considerably changed or may be dropped altogether in the light of new discovery, but that will not affect the self-evident fact of a spiritual evolution, an evolution of Consciousness, a progression of the soul's manifestation in material existence."<sup>3</sup>

But why should all this happen? What is after all its meaning and significance? Sri Aurobindo's answer to this question is. "The involution of a superconscient Spirit in inconscient Matter is the secret cause of this visible and apparent world. The keyword of the earth's riddle is the gradual evolution of a hidden illimitable consciousness and power .." What I understand from this is that "Earth-life is one self-chosen habitation of a great Divinity and his aeonic will is to change it from a blind prison into his splendid mansion and higher heaven-reaching temple."<sup>4</sup>

And finally I ask myself: What will be the aim of this secret miracle? What will be our work in order to be part of this great event? A very precise and emphatic answer is offered to us by the Master "To know, possess and be the divine being in an animal and egoistic consciousness, to convert our twilight obscure physical mentality into the plenary supramental illumination, to build peace and a 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 "<sup>5</sup>

So, what will be the outcome of this next miracle which we are now sure is going to take place? I wonder what will be the nature of this new race—an omnipotent creature perhaps, more perfect in his appearance? Capable of doing wonderful tasks? Maybe there will be something almost magical about it. Will it be brilliant? Strong? Or what? Well, to my mind this was a mystery, but remains no longer so when I read what Sri Aurobindo has to say about the Superman: "This divinisation of the nature of which we speak is a metamorphosis, not a mere growth into some kind of superhumanity, but a change from the falsehood of our ignorant nature into the truth of God-nature "<sup>6</sup>

"Superman is not man climbed to his own natural zenith, not a superior degree of human greatness, knowledge, power, intelligence, will, character, genius, dynamic force, saintliness, love, purity or perfection Supermind is something beyond mental man and his limits, a greater consciousness than the

highest consciousness proper to human nature.”<sup>7</sup>

The Mother has said, “Sri Aurobindo came upon earth to teach this truth to men. He told them that man is only a transitional being living in a mental consciousness, but with the possibility of acquiring a new consciousness, the Truth-consciousness, and capable of living a life perfectly harmonious, good and beautiful, happy and fully conscious. During the whole of his life upon earth, Sri Aurobindo gave all his time to establish in himself this consciousness he called supramental, and to help those gathered around him to realise it.”<sup>8</sup>

Then, I found in the following passage of Sri Aurobindo, packed into a single paragraph, the one answer to all my questions and ambiguities: “The descent of the supramental is an inevitable necessity in the logic of things and is therefore sure. It is because people do not understand what the supermind is or realise the significance of the emergence of consciousness in a world of inconscient Matter that they are unable to realise this inevitability. I suppose a matter-of-fact observer, if there had been one at the time of the unrelieved reign of inanimate Matter in the earth’s beginning, would have criticised any promise of the emergence of life in a world of dead earth and rock and mineral as an absurdity and a chimera; so too, afterwards he would have repeated this mistake and regarded the emergence of thought and reason in an animal world as an absurdity and a chimera. It is the same now with the appearance of supermind in the stumbling mentality of this world of human consciousness and its reasoning ignorance.”<sup>9</sup>

I feel the most beautiful way to comprehend and feel the necessity of the next miracle is the following lines from *Savitri*:

“Often a lustrous inner dawn shall come  
Lighting the chambers of the slumbering mind;  
A sudden bliss shall run through every limb  
And Nature with a mightier Presence fill.  
Thus shall the earth open to divinity  
And common natures feel the wide uplift,  
Illumine common acts with the Spirit’s ray  
And meet the deity in common things.  
Nature shall live to manifest secret God,  
The Spirit shall take up the human play,  
This earthly life become the life divine.”<sup>10</sup>

*References*

- 1 *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 22), p 25
- 2 *Ibid*
- 3 *The Life Divine* (Cent Ed , Vol 19), pp 835-36
- 4 *The Hour of God* (4th Ed , 1982), p 96
- 5 *The Life Divine* (Cent Ed , Vol 18), pp 1-2
- 6 *The Hour of God* (1st Ed , 1959), p 54
- 7 *Ibid* (4th Ed , 1982), pp 92-93
- 8 *The Ideal Child* (6th Ed , 1982), pp 12-13
- 9 *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 22), pp 8-9
- 10 *Savitri* (Cent Ed , Vol 29), pp 710-11