

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

JUNE 1996

PRICE: Rs. 10.00

Revised Subscriptions

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

INLAND

Annual: Rs 100.00

Life Membership: Rs. 1400 00

Price per Single Copy: Rs 10 00

OVERSEAS

Sea Mail

Annual. \$18 00 or £12 00

Life Membership: \$252 00 or £168.00

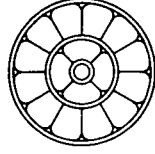
Air Mail:

Annual: \$36 00 for American & Pacific countries

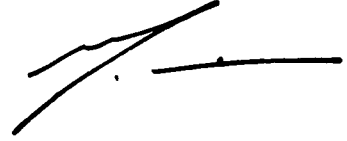
\$26 00 for all other countries

Life Membership \$504 00 for American & Pacific countries

\$364 00 for all other countries



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



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

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

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLIX

No. 6

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	
THE MOTHER'S HELP IN DIFFICULTIES	.. 455
<i>Nolini Kanta Gupta</i>	
THE MOTHER'S TALKS TO YOUNG CHILDREN	... 461
<i>K. D. Sethna</i>	
GOETHE—THE SUFI UNFULFILLED	. 464
<i>M. S. Srinivasan</i>	
THE VISION AND WORK OF INDIAN CULTURE— THE PAST AND THE FUTURE	... 472
<i>Shyam Kumari</i>	
MUSINGS ON <i>PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS</i>	. 477
<i>Jagat Kapadia</i>	
ENLIGHTENED INTERPRETATIONS AND POSITIVE UNDERSTANDINGS, CONDENSED	. 482
<i>Daksha</i>	
ON THE ASHRAM (Poem)	... 487
<i>Shyam Sunder Jhunjhunwala</i>	
THE SUPRAMENTAL MANIFESTATION	.. 488
<i>T. Prasad</i>	
TO THE FLUTE-PLAYER OF PONDICHERRY (Poem)	.. 490
<i>Nilima Das</i>	
SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA	... 491
<i>Pravir Malik</i>	
THE BATTLE AT HAND	... 495
<i>Dinkar D. Palande</i>	
DON'T REGRET (Poem)	. 498
<i>Sabita Tripathy, Nandakishore Mishra</i>	
A STUDY OF <i>BHAWANI MANDIR</i>	.. 499

<i>Maggi</i>		
THE END OF FAITH (Poem)	...	504
<i>Maggi and Michael</i>		
PU CHAO AND THE MARVELLOUS FUTURE	..	505
<i>Jyotsna Mohanty</i>		
BOATMAN (Poem)	..	506
<i>Krishna Chakravarti</i>		
AN INVOCATION	...	507
<i>Aju Mukhopadhyay</i>		
THE SOLAR ECLIPSE ON MY BIRTH-DAY (Poem)	...	508
<i>Abani Sinha</i>		
A PLUNGE INTO THE UNKNOWN	..	509
<i>V. Jaybee</i>		
THE PURSUIT OF AGNI AND SOMA	...	517
<i>Paru Patil</i>		
WHAT IS THE BEST WAY OF SURMOUNTING THE ORDINARY MENTAL ACTIVITY?	...	522
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE		
<i>Dinkar D Palande</i>		
Review of SRI AUROBINDO, THE SMILING MASTER by JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJEE	...	524
<i>D. Gnanasekaran</i>		
Review of SUDDEN TALES THE FOLKS TOLD by P RAJA	..	526
<i>Sunanda</i>		
A MESSAGE TO SANTA CLAUS	..	528
<i>P Raja</i>		
A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS		529
<i>R. Y. Deshpande</i>		
THE SPLENDID IMPERATIVE OF SATYAVAN'S DEATH	.	534
<i>Georgette Coty</i>		
CHRISTALIS' A STORY	...	545

STUDENTS' SECTION

<i>Speech by Ramakrishna Shivashankar</i>		
THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION		
EIGHTIETH SEMINAR, 25 FEBRUARY 1996		
INDIA AND THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY	...	550

THE MOTHER'S HELP IN DIFFICULTIES

SOME LETTERS BY SRI AUROBINDO

Assurance of Victory

BE sure that the Mother will always be with you to carry you upon the path. Difficulties come and difficulties go, but, she being with you, the victory is sure.

18-7-1936

Faith in the Mother's Working

(1)

One has to cleave firmly to the faith in the Mother's working behind all appearances and you will find that that will carry you through.

31-8-1935

(2)

It is the true attitude to leave all to the Mother and trust entirely in her and let her lead you on the path to the goal.

2-3-1936

(3)

It is not by his own strength or good qualities that anyone can attain the divine change; there are only two things that matter, the Mother's force at work and the sadhak's will to open to it and trust in her working. Keep your will and your trust and care nothing for the rest—they are only difficulties that all meet in their sadhana.

13-5-1936

(4)

Nothing is impossible if the nature of the psychic being is awake and leading you with the Mother's consciousness and force behind it and working in you.

19-10-1935

(5)

If one remains in full confidence in the Mother and psychically open, then the

Mother's force will do all and one has only to give consent and keep oneself open and aspire.

12-11-1935

(6)

Whether the progress is rapid or slow, the attitude should always be an entire faith and reliance on the Mother; just as you do not think that the progress was the result of your own effort or merit but of your taking the right attitude of reliance and the Mother's force working, so you should not think that any slowness or difficulty was due to your own demerit but only seek to keep this attitude of reliance and let the Mother's Force work—slowly or rapidly does not matter.

14-11-1935

(7)

No. It is perhaps how some part of the vital or physical consciousness figured it. But the path is not a desert nor are you alone, since the Mother is with you.

2-11-1933

The Mother's Positive Attitude

(1)

Mother never thinks of future difficulties, falls or dangers. Her concentration is always on love and light, not on difficulties and downfalls.

(2)

It is the higher reality that Mother brings into the world—without it all else is ignorant and false.

3-8-1934

The One Thing to do Always

(1)

Once one has entered the path of Yoga, there is only one thing to do, to fix oneself in the resolution to go to the end whatever happens, whatever difficulties

arise. None really gets the fulfilment in Yoga by his own capacity—it is by the greater Force that stands over you that it will come—and it is the call, persistent through all vicissitudes, to that Force, by which the fulfilment will come. Even when you cannot aspire actively, keep yourself turned to the Mother for the help to come—that is the one thing to do always.

3-1-1934

(2)

Everyone who is turned to the Mother is doing my Yoga. It is a great mistake to suppose that one can “do” the Purna Yoga—i.e. carry out and fulfil all the sides of the Yoga by one's own effort. No human being can do that. What one has to do is to put oneself in the Mother's hands and open oneself to her by service, by bhakti, by aspiration; then the Mother by her light and force works in him so that the sadhana is done. It is a mistake also to have the ambition to be a big Purna Yogi or a supramental being and ask oneself how far have I got towards that. The right attitude is to be devoted and given to the Mother and to wish to be whatever she wants you to be. The rest is for the Mother to decide and do in you.

April, 1935

(3)

There is one thing everybody should remember that everything should be done from the point of view of Yoga, of sadhana, of growing into a divine life in the Mother's consciousness. To insist upon one's own mind and its ideas, to allow oneself to be governed by one's own vital feelings and reactions should not be the rule of life here. One has to stand back from these, to be detached, to get in their place the true knowledge from above, the true feelings from the psychic within. This cannot be done if the mind and vital do not surrender, if they do not renounce their attachment to their own ignorance which they call truth, right, justice. All the trouble rises from that; if that were overcome, the true basis of life, of work, of harmony, of all in the union with the Divine would more and more replace the trouble and difficulty of the present.

Trust in the Mother's Force in Difficulty

(1)

What is needed is perseverance—to go on without discouragement, recognising that the process of the nature and the action of the Mother's force is working through the difficulty even and will do all that is needed. Our incapacity does not

matter—there is no human being who is not in his parts of nature incapable—but the Divine Force is also there. If one puts one's trust in that, incapacity will be changed into capacity. Difficulty and struggle themselves then become a means towards the achievement.

27-5-1936

(2)

Never allow this idea “I am not able”, “I am not doing enough” to come and vex you; it is a tamasic suggestion and brings depression and depression opens the way to the attacks of the wrong forces. Your position should be, “Let me do what I can; the Mother's force is there, the Divine is there to see that in due time all will be done.”

4-11-1935

(3)

Not to be disturbed, to remain quiet and confident is the right attitude, but it is necessary also to receive the help of the Mother and not to stand back for any reason from her solicitude. One ought not to indulge ideas of incapacity, inability to respond, dwelling too much on defects and failures and allowing the mind to be in pain and shame on their account; for these ideas and feelings become in the end weakening things. If there are difficulties, stumblings or failures, one has to look at them quietly and call in tranquilly and persistently the divine help for their removal, but not to allow oneself to be upset or pained or discouraged. Yoga is not an easy path and the total change of the nature cannot be done in a day.

(4)

This kind of grief and despondency are the worst obstacles one can raise up in the sadhana—they ought not to be indulged in. What one cannot do oneself one can get done by calling the Mother's force. To receive that and let it work in you is the true means of success in the sadhana.

(5)

Whatever difficulties still remain, be sure that they will be surmounted. There is no need for the outer being to be nervous—the Mother's Force and the devotion within you will be sufficient to overcome all that stands in the way.

(6)

There is no reason to be discouraged. Three years is not too much for the preparation of the nature and it is usually through fluctuations that it gradually grows nearer to the point where a continuous progress becomes possible. One has to cleave firmly to the faith in the Mother's working behind all appearances and you will find that that will carry you through.

31-8-1935

(7)

You should not yield to sorrow or despair—there is no reason why you should. The Mother's grace has not been withdrawn from you for a moment. Do not allow the attacks of others to shake you like this—you know well the motives from which they act—and for the rest they are not going to pursue any farther the course which a fit of passion dictated to them. The protection will be with you and you need not fear or sorrow any longer. Put your trust in the Divine and shake off all this like a nightmare that has passed. Believe that our love and grace are with you.

(8)

There has always been too much reliance on the action of your own mind and will—that is why you cannot progress. If you could once get the habit of silent reliance on the power of the Mother—not merely calling it in to support your own effort—the obstacle would diminish and eventually disappear.

(9)

The more one is open to the Mother's action, the more easily difficulties get solved and the right thing is done.

21-9-1934

(10)

It was by your personal efforts without guidance that you got into difficulties and into a heated condition in which you could not meditate etc. I asked you to drop the effort and remain quiet and you did so. My intention was that by your remaining quiet, it would be possible for the Mother's Force to work in you and establish a better starting-point and a course of initial experiences. It was what

was beginning to come; but if your mind again becomes active and tries to arrange the sadhana for itself, then disturbances are likely to come. The Divine Guidance works best when the psychic is open and in front (yours was beginning to open), but it can also work even when the sadhak is either not conscious of it, or else knows it only by its results.

(Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother, pp 723-733)

THE MOTHER'S TALKS TO YOUNG CHILDREN

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA'S REPORT

The Spiral Universe

EVOLUTION does not proceed in a straight line, but in a spiral. That is to say, it is not a constant progress in one direction, but consists of progression, regression and an ultimate progression. The spiral movement means that all things must enter into the phenomenon of evolution, so that it is not one thing only that progresses and others remain behind but that all move forward—all move forward but at different speeds and also from different starting-points. And they move not straight as the crow flies, but in a circle like the soaring eagle. When you concentrate upon one point of the circle, you will see relatively to it many others not advancing at all but receding and the point itself will seem at times to be going back towards a position already left behind. One goes back to pick up certain elements that have not been included in the progress, not properly dealt with. It happens usually that when you progress in one thing, you forget another; so you have to turn back and take up the neglected element. Thus you have to go round and round, as it were, until you include the totality of your being, even embrace the totality of the universe. When you have, however, gathered the bypassed factor and come back to the original position from where you seemed to have regressed, you find that you are not exactly at the same point but at a corresponding point on a higher plane. That forms a spiral, not merely a circle.

There are, in the universe, an infinite number of points moving, each forming a spiral; so there are an infinite number of spirals. And these spirals do not lie only side by side, but cross each other and thus give an aspect of contrariness and contradictoriness. So if you wish to take a total view of the movement of universal progress, you will be somewhat puzzled. There are so many lines that advance and there are so many which recede at the same time. Some come into the light, others go into the background and none independent or self-sufficient. There is a sort of intermingling, even co-ordination.

The universe can thus be conceived as a globe consisting of an infinite number of intersecting spirals. One can give to each spiral a different colour, each representing one aspect of nature's movement. A model globe of this kind may perhaps be constructed. A section only of the curve of a spiral is on the outside, the rest is within the globe and can be seen because of its special colour, provided we consider the globe as something transparent. It is these multiple sections outside that form the surface of the globe. The inside is of course full of spirals, excepting that section of a spiral which is outside. And yet though crossing and recrossing they do not form an opaque mass. One can see through and follow the brilliant lines of various colours. That is how I see it. You can try

to make a geometrical figure of it, if possible.

Nature has a plan of its own. It is not like the coherent rational plan of man. Nature's plan is made of an aspiration, a decision and a goal. But the way is quite fantastic, so it appears to man. Nature seems to move from moment to moment, under the stress of the occasion; there are advances, withdrawals, trials, contradictions, demolitions of things, laborious building up, and again throwing down. It is a complete chaos. She begins a thing, leaves it half done, takes up another, rejects one thing altogether, begins anew something left off, makes, remakes, unmakes, separates, mixes up. She follows a million lines of advance at the same time but not from the same point and each with its own speed and rhythm. There is such a tangle that it seems to make no sense. Still there is a plan, she pursues an object which seems to be very clear to her, although veiled to the human eye. The spiral globe I spoke of was meant to give some idea of this complex unity in Nature's plan.

You can bring in a better order, with less waste and more efficiency, a more conscious organisation. But for that man must change his own inner organisation first. In his own consciousness and being he must bring out a new order, a new cosmos.

This Expanding Universe

The universe is a manifestation, that is to say, the unfolding of infinite possibilities. The unfolding has not stopped, it is continuing and will continue, throwing out or bringing into physical expression all that lies behind and latent. The universe may be considered as a sphere or globe, a totality or assemblage containing everything that exists here and is being manifested. Beyond and outside, as it were, this circle of creation lies the transcendent, the Supreme Divine, in his own status. The transcendent means the unmanifest. It does not mean, however, the void; for it contains all that is to be manifested, each and everything in its potentiality, its essence, in a seed form. All is there as a secret possibility, a fundamental truth of being—all is there not simply as a general idea, but in every detail, though as it were on a microscopic scale, something like the chromosomes in life plasm. The transcendent is beyond time and space. Manifestation or creation begins with the formulation of time and space, the frame in which what lay latent is gradually brought out and displayed. The transcendent is consciousness absorbed in itself, identified with itself; manifestation is consciousness waking and looking at itself as its object (*La prise de conscience objective de soi*).

Now, one can be seated or fixed exclusively in the status of the unmanifest; to such a one the infinite and eternal is an everpresent reality, there is nothing like past or future, everything is. One knows and is in the presence of a fixed actuality; whatever happened, whatever will happen—as it seems to us—all are there realised on the same plane and at the same moment (although the terms

plane and moment do not quite apply there). It is the world or status of the absolutely determined. Free choice or indeterminacy, the unexpected and the unforeseen have no place here.

On the contrary, the sphere of manifestation is precisely the field of the sudden and the incalculable, that is to say, of free will. Things appear here that were not before, forces come into play that were not expected or even imagined. They all move along lines that shift and change continually. This is the status of becoming—*sambhūti*, as designated by the Upanishad and described by the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, in the words *panta rhei*, everything flows on. Here, often a certain disposition that seems quite stable or predictable is upset all of a sudden by the irruption of a new and novel factor from somewhere else.

But in between the two, on the borderland, as it were, there is a poise of consciousness which combines both in an integral perception, it is a single movement of both being and becoming. It is the Supermind. It is the point where what is or exists in the unmanifest just *becomes* in the manifest, the pure truth or reality above at standstill stirs and begins to come out or disengage itself through a play of possibles. It is like a cinema film that is rolled up and kept in a spool till it is put on the projector and rolled out gradually upon the screen of life and in life-size presentation.

The transcendent then is an integral reality, for it contains all and the whole, but it is of fixed dimension—*avyaya*, it neither increases, nor decreases: it is the Stable, the Stagnant—*sthanuracaloyam*. The cosmos, on the other hand, is not only moving and changing, but also ever increasing or expanding. For new possibles are becoming reals here and adding to the sum of its factors. Out of the transcendent, the unmanifest, are constantly shooting down potentials and becoming dynamic in the universe making it richer and ever richer.

Furthermore, this expansion is not merely accretion but a growth, that is to say, it is directed and has a sense and purpose and end in view. In fact all the possibles that find play, the elements that enter here below are necessary in as much as they contribute to the meaning of the Play, to the working out of the dénouement. We can take again the analogy of the cinema film and say that the unrolling film is interesting because it has a continuous and developing story to tell, with a beginning, a middle and an end. Likewise, the manifestation too tells a connected story—it is not a drivel, but has a goal; it is a process elaborated by a *final cause*. Even like an individual being it is an organism, ever growing and bringing out its latent possibilities, moving towards a high fruition of its aspiration and destiny.

In this sense manifestation is a more complete—and more and more complete—reality than the non-manifest Supreme. The non-manifest, the transcendent is an integral reality, the manifestation a completer reality, since it adds to it its own reality, the actuality of concrete expression.

GOETHE—THE SUFI UNFULFILLED

GOETHE and Shelley were by far the most gifted poets of their age. Nor does their similarity end with the high excellence of their poetic gifts. Although different in various respects owing to outward circumstances as well as to Goethe's being much more complex and versatile, they had a remarkable kinship in the power of what may be termed "mysticism of artistic love." In Shelley this power can be seen by all; in Goethe it has to be discerned from amidst a multitude of qualities—the balanced Greek intellectuality, the humanism of the Renaissance temper, the Modern Man's Faustian rebelliousness and curiosity—but it is the central power of the poet in him, and to overlook it is to miss the inmost point in his psychology and the deepest tone in his self-expression.

Pantheism and the Eternal Feminine

Goethe was a pantheist: he declared that Divinity is not outside of the universe but that a Divine Substance underlies all phenomena and the forms of outward Nature have an inward animating Spirit which is perfect and which in its Wholeness carries all phenomena as phases of its perfection. In that Wholeness it is a tremendous mystery—the Absolute of the philosophers, "the inconceivable, utterly unimaginable highest Being" of which Goethe used to speak in awed accents to Eckermann. But between the Absolute and the relative, the Divine was for him an active Presence ordering from ineffable eternity the universe in time. While Goethe the poet found in the Absolute little matter for thought, the active ordering World-Presence haunted him. Not only did he intellectually live with it. Again and again, like Shelley, he passed through an exaltation which made outward phenomenal Nature so transparent a medium of inward divine Nature that, when Jacobi asserted in view of the obvious imperfection of things that "Nature hid God," he could in truth flash out: "Not from everyone!" The intellect, to him, was merely an instrument to formulate the findings of an intuition born of an emotional and aesthetic response to things. "Man cannot learn to know a thing," wrote Goethe,¹ "unless he loves it, and the deeper and fuller the knowledge is to be, the stronger, the more intense and the more living must be the love, I will even say the passion." His pantheism, therefore, is best summed up in his famous dictum: "The core of Nature is set within man's heart." Its most poetic utterance is the oft-quoted passage where Faust makes his confession of faith to Margaret that Love, Rapture and God are one and the same Omnipresence containing and sustaining all.

According to Goethe, the Love and Rapture that is God is the infinite never-ending union of an Eternal Feminine with an Eternal Masculine. In this union the two cannot be differentiated but on the level of our own existence where man and woman stand apart, Divinity in order to remove all differen-

tiation must come as a Love and Rapture with the face and force of the opposite sex idealised. So, man attains blessedness by following what Goethe apostrophised as “the Woman in woman:” under the aspect of feminine perfection—“Maiden, Mother, Goddess of all life”—the World-Presence attracts and fulfils man, giving at the same time to woman the opportunity to rise morally to the full height of her destiny as the incarnation of Divine Grace—Grace in both its meanings, the Everlasting Mercy as well as the “Beauty of ancient days which is ever new.” Hence, like the Sufi and the Tantric, Goethe dwelt in the feeling of a Universal Creatrix who was also a Mediatrix between his soul and the ultimate completion of its existence, and he assimilated into his feeling the personal passion of Christian Mariolatry and the impersonal ardour of Platonic idealism seeking the one Perfect Form which the manifold time-process images.

Physical Interpretation of Sufism

But he could not keep it on the rare oriental level. What was to the Persian mystics and the Indian Yogis a powerful symbol became for him more real than the Truth itself; for, while they regarded woman as only an earthly simile of the Divine, to be renounced as an object of lust and worshipped only in the spirit for the sake of the Reality behind, Goethe looked upon woman not as a simile but a visible synonym. Though human love thus took on the colour of a sacred rite, the initiation into which he esoterically described as the dying into the Life of life, yet his physical interpretation of Sufism debarred him from directly realising what was the quintessence of his religious perception, the “Mater Gloriosa” concealed behind each Gretchen. “The Woman clothed with the Sun,” the Archetypal Beauty which made the earth so fair, the highest Idea-Force by which the whole universe, according to him, was harmoniously expressed and which glowed through even the thickest of Jacobi’s veils, became lost in the heat and tumult of carnal desire.

He found the immaculate splendour too bright, because he did not know that in order to enter what the ancients called “the gates of the Sun” and pass to “where the Immortal Spirit wastes not nor perishes”, one has to gaze inward—a practice which he curiously distrusted as liable to lead to inactivity. The wisdom of the seers who sought in the heart a core deeper than the emotional-aesthetic centre was not fully open to him, though ever and anon he felt a blind affinity to it; and he never did learn to understand that the realisation of the Supreme Spirit by an inward mystical discipline could be used as a fount of inspired action in the world, a stress of God-willed energy overflowing through the transformed individual instrument. Unable to stand the pressure of the profound intuition which he sometimes had, the intense pang of revelatory pleasure which is mysticism, be it only a mysticism of artistic love, his was fated to be the cry of Faust at the hour of dawn when awakened by the song of the elves:

The sun is here!—Alas, my eyes are blinded!
 I turn away, I cannot bear his radiance.
 Even so it is when all the self is minded
 To force the goal of our own confidence
 And wide are flung the gates of all fulfilment,
 Sudden there bursts from that eternal portal,
 A sea of flame, past mercy, past concealment;
 We thought to light a candle,—fire immortal
 Wraps us, engulfed in unknown glowing seas:
 Is it hate or love that those great gates outpour?
 That ocean full of rapture and of tears?
 Awakened we shrink and turn to earth once more,
 Hiding our faces in our childish fears.²

The ring of the mystical intuition here is no doubt authentic; but like Icarus Goethe sought the empyrean with wings that were not quite genuine. Suffering “the fall precipitant,” he was obliged to make it the first article of his credo that man is born to look at lit things, not at light:

Then be the Sun behind me, not before!
 I turn and gaze, my heart abrim with wonder,
 Where the wild torrent down the torn cliff rushes.
 From ledge to ledge it leaps in joyous thunder,
 Forth in a thousand swirling streams it gushes,
 Bursting in foam, tossing the spray on high.
 Lo, in calm glory from the tumult springing
 The million-coloured bow that cannot die!
 Through change unchanging, now its pure arch flinging
 In full clear lines, now faint where the winds fly,
 While still the coolness and the fragrance hover.
 Torrent and rainbow!—So our efforts seem.
 Follow that thought, that image and discover
 Our life lies in the changing coloured gleam.³

This surely is one of Goethe’s marvellous poetic victories; but it is also an expression of his spiritual defeat. Indeed he that has felt the Divine, however passingly, cannot be the same man again. And Goethe, who had a feel and sense of the Sun, went always vaguely thirsting after the Eternal and the Perfect and straining through all phenomenal objects to glimpse the Everlasting Moment of flawless rhythm which is the Time-experience of God, “the calm of His celestial Day,” in which the shift and commotion of the world are elevated and transfigured into the divine archetype behind its imperfect course of history. “In

the true symbolism,” Goethe opines elsewhere, “the particular represents the Universal not as a dream or shadow, but as a living momentary revelation of the Unfathomable...”⁴ By the definite embrace of the Earth in preference to the Sun as his domain, he lost something which mundane Nature really hid and which no amount of poetic philosophy could supply, clutch as it might at love as the phenomenon super-symbolic of the Eternal.

“The Desire of the Moth for the Star”

This is not to say that Goethe did not feel the transcendental phase of human emotion: in his relation with Charlotte Von Stein he did feel it unmistakably:

For, all that men within their earth-bound limits
Learn of high bliss and call by holy names....
The light that only in their loneliest thoughts
Burns for the wise, for poets in their dreams,
Their heavenliest—I too in my best hours
Found it in her and found it there for me.⁵

But the concupiscent part of him was too vehement in its demands to bear the strain of Charlotte’s idealism. Finding no satisfactory solution to his liaison with her, he fled to Italy where, in Rome, he gave vent to himself in “the sweet flower gardens” of Armida in sensual experiences which formed the undertone of some of the most antinomian of his *Roman Elegies*. But he was not satisfied with this heartless sort of enjoyment, either. He wanted true love, and on returning formed a union with the young and pretty Christiane Vulpius which fully afforded him that, without at the same time starving his passions.

It cannot be denied that he combined with human love a superhuman longing and, even at his most earthly, felt “the desire of the moth for the star.” For, men and women he saw as but human fronts and faces of the world-creative Divine Polarity of God the lover and God the beloved, the Eternal Masculine and the Eternal Feminine. All this hectic yearning of the flesh, he therefore held, points to a consummation in which the human lovers lose the cravings of their separate limited egos and fuse into an ecstasy in which Matter falls off like a withered garment and Spirit, with the Divine Polarity ever implicit in it, shines out pure of the aberrations of the earthly Eros. It was to this strange dematerialisation that he gave, in Shelleyan fashion, the name Death: so that Death signified to him not merely the cessation of terrestrial life but the flight to a heavenly consciousness in which “all failure shall grow to achievement.” The mere brute fact of death meant only the casting off of one material body for another, a reincarnation of the soul for still further progress:

Like water it wanders,
 The spirit of man:
 It comes from the sky,
 To the sky it goes
 Then down once more,
 Drawn down to the earth,
 It changes, it flows.⁶

In a letter to Weiland Goethe writes with reference to Charlotte Von Stein: "I cannot explain to myself the significance of the power which this woman has over me, unless by metempsychosis. Yes, we were once man and wife." The same idea he expresses in an exquisite poem to Charlotte herself; for, had he not too strong an intuition that nothing could be which did not in one form or another exist before to prepare for its present condition and that if the human soul were an "entelechy"—that is, in Goethe's own words, "a piece of eternity which the few years of its connection with the body does not age"—it would be absurd to think of it as not having had its own definite soul-nature from the beginning of time, developing its possibilities of manifestation on earth through many births? Death, therefore, was, from the natural point of view, a transition to another plane of being, with a subsequent return to this; but in the high esoteric sense, it stood for the Shelleyan trampling of life into fragments, the trampling of that imperfection which,

like a dome of many-coloured glass,
 Stains the white radiance of Eternity.

To make the brute fact at the same time a celestial truth was, in Goethe's eyes, the aim and end of living. His own failure, owing to the downward trend of his passions, to realise the light of the Divine had led him to the conclusion that man is condemned never to dwell in the ideal and perfect Consciousness, the Solar Glory, while alive: striving is all his lot, never achievement. But when the fetters of the body are broken, surmised Goethe, there must be the possibility of attainment: the very futility of the effort here towards the Divine implied for him fulfilment elsewhere, in a poise of consciousness in which, to employ Tantric terms, the pure Shakti, the one supreme Creatrix, is in everlasting union with the supreme Ishwara, "the Untellable"—"*das Unbeschreibliche*." To penetrate into this beatific condition was, in his philosophy, love's crown of Love, and the soul's preparation for this leap into the Infinite with the help of "the unknown Eros" which sustains the world, in Shelley's phrase, "from beneath and kindles it above", was the height of wisdom leading to the *grand finale* of human life—the divine death.

Thus we find him striking in one of his mystical poems a note such as has

been sounded with an equal poignancy and richness by only Wagner at the close of *Tristan und Isolde*:

Tell no man, tell wise man only,
 For the world might count it madness,
 Him I praise who thirsts for fire,
 Thirsts for death and dies in gladness.

Thou wast got and thou begettest
 In dewy love-nights long ago;
 Now a stranger love shall seize thee
 When the quiet lamp burns low.

Thou art freed and lifted, taken
 From the shadow of our night,
 Thou art drawn by some new passion
 Towards a nobler marriage-rite.

Distance cannot weight thee, soaring
 Where the far enchantment calls,
 Till the moth, the star-fire's lover,
 Drinks the light, and burns, and falls.

Die and grow! Until thou hearest
 What that word can say,
 The world is dark and thou a wanderer
 Who has lost his way ⁷

Tragedy of Spiritual Unfulfilment

But the divine death thus glorified is not achievable, as the spiritual experiences of all ages unanimously show, without transcendence of the temporal symbol of Eros. No shuffling off the mortal coil can kill the roots of desire, nor lead to godlike Bliss until they are killed. As Goethe himself recognised, in order to partake of that Bliss the human entelechy must be made fit for it while still alive. It must die and grow every minute if finally with the physical dissolution it is to die into God. But, it may be remarked, once the fitness for God's Bliss is reached, the very necessity of physically dying for the sake of entering the defic is removed. When the true Yogi dies, he only continues the state of blessedness which was his during life; for "he in whom the knot of the heart-strings has been rent asunder," says the Katha Upanishad, "enjoys the Bliss of Brahman even in this body of clay." Goethe, however, could not snap

the cords of human attachment by diving deep into his psyche in constant meditative adoration of the Supreme. Perhaps his most magically Sufi address to Love the Universal Mediatrix is:

Thou mayst choose a thousand forms to hide thee,
 Yet, All-beloved, I shall know thee there;
 Thou mayst take enchanted veils to shroud thee,
 Yet, thou All-present, I shall feel thee near.

In the pure springing of the tall young cypress,
 All-statiest, I know thee well the while,
 In the pure lakelet's limpid, laughing ripple,
 Thou, All-beguiler, I behold thy smile.

And when the fountain lifts her jet and opens,
 All-playfullest, I gaze upon thy glee,
 And when the cloud-forms change their changing fashion,
 All-myriad-natured, I am sure of thee.

Gay in the meadow's flower-embroidered raiment,
 All-starry-brightness, I can see thy face;
 Where the light-handed ivy climbs and clusters,
 All-clamberer, I catch thy eager grace.

When the new morning flames upon the mountains,
 All-gladdener, gladly I welcome thee,
 And when the pure sky arches out above us,
 All-heart-enlarger, I know it breathes of thee.

If aught I learn by outward sense or inward,
 All-learned teacher, I learn it all through thee,
 And when I name the hundred names of Allah,
 There echoes with each one a name for thee.⁸

But this most inspired address of his to the Eternal Feminine is tragically typical of the spiritual unfulfilment of his whole life, because it was after all an apotheosis of his attachment to Marianne Von Willemar! The only other tragedy equally typical and regrettable is Shelley's passionate confusion of the Divine Beauty, which so urgently beckoned to his soul, with the human all-too-human Emilia Viviani.

Notes

- 1 Letter to Jacobi, May 10, 1812
 - 2 Faust Part II, Scene 1, ll 4708-713 The verse-translations quoted in this article are by Miss F M Stawell and G Lowes Dickinson, to whose admirable book *Goethe and Faust* the present article owes several suggestions
 - 3 *Ibid* , ll 4714-727
 - 4 Maxims and Reflections 314
 - 5 The Secrets
 - 6 Gesang der Geister uber den Wissen, Oct, 1779
 - 7 The Divan of East and West The Singer's Boon—"Sacred Longing"
 - 8 *Ibid* , Book of Zuleika—last poem
-

THE VISION AND WORK OF INDIAN CULTURE— THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

(Continued from the issue of May 1996)

The Great Attempt

AN intuitive spiritual vision requires a living and flexible insight into human life and nature to implement it faithfully in society. Both these conditions were to a certain extent fulfilled in ancient Vedic India by the presence of the illumined spiritual personalities as the leaders of culture and society. But the Vedic ideal of the spiritual man is not that of a world-shunning ascetic but “one who has lived fully the life of man and found the word of the supra-intellectual, supramental, spiritual truth. He has risen above these lower limitations and can view all things from above, but also he is in sympathy with their effort and can view them from within, he has the complete inner knowledge and the higher surpassing knowledge. Therefore he can guide the world humanly as God guides it divinely, because like the Divine he is in the life of the world and yet above it.”¹ In the Vedic India, the spiritual vision and ideals of the Rishis had a general pervading influence on the society. The Rishi in the ancient Vedic culture was an influential and respected figure in society who actively shaped its values and moulded its institutions. Religion centred around the idea of sacrifice to the gods was the dominant motive-force which governed the life of even the common man. There was a loose, flexible and mobile social structure translating as faithfully as possible and with an organic and intuitive spontaneity the original spiritual ideal of the four-fold order, Chaturvarna. The other unique feature of the ancient Vedic culture is that this spiritual influence on the society came not only from the Rishi living in the forest and the ashram but also from the ruling kings many of whom were deep spiritual thinkers and accomplished Yogis. In fact, it was pointed out by both Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo that some of the great truths of Vedanta were discovered by Kshatriya Yogis like Pravahana Jaivali and Ajatashatru who were ruling monarchs. As Swami Vivekananda says in one of his lectures:

“In various Upanishads we find that this Vedanta philosophy is not the outcome of meditation in the forests but the very best parts of it were thought out and expressed by brains which were busiest in the everyday affair of life. . . the people who discovered these truths of Vedanta were neither living in caves nor forests, nor following the ordinary vocations of life, but men who we have every reason to believe led the busiest lives, men who had to command armies, to sit on thrones and look to the welfare of millions—and all these in days of absolute monarchy. Yet they could find time to think out these thoughts, to

realise them and to teach them to humanity... we cannot conceive of any man busier than an absolute monarch, a man who is ruling over millions of people, and yet, some of them were deep thinkers.”²

Sri Aurobindo in a significant remark in the footnote to his own statement that the man of knowledge or Brahmana cannot serve truth with freedom and perfection if he has not the qualities of the Kshatriya to open and conquer new kingdoms, says “That perhaps is why it was the Kshatriya bringing his courage, audacity, spirit of conquest into the fields of intuitive knowledge and spiritual experience who first discovered the great truths of Vedanta.”³

But the reign of the Yogi and the Rishi cannot last long. The demands of the evolutionary cycles of Nature bring in other powers and faculties of human consciousness which have to be developed. The reign of the spiritual and intuitive mind of the sage is soon replaced by the intellectual, ethical and religious mind of the thinker, scholar and the priest. This was what happened in India. The spiritual ideal of Moksha was still preserved but reserved only for the individual. And the collectivity for all practical purposes was governed by the ethico-religious and social ideal of Dharma, and regulated by the intellectual, ethical, religious mind of the interpreters of Dharma with all its characteristic imperfections like rigidity, dogmatism, tradition-bound conventionality. So, naturally, in spite of a sincere effort to regulate society according to the religious and moral ideas of Dharma, the attempt ended in a rigid and stagnant society. As usual, the immense difficulty of transforming the vital consciousness of man which is the source of his economic, social and political life proved too formidable for the moral and religious mind. Sri Aurobindo explains the reasons for the limited success of the ancient Indian social endeavour.

“But the difficulty of making the social life an expression of man’s true self and some highest realisation of the spirit within him is immensely greater than that which attends a spiritual self-expression through the things of the mind, religion, thought, art, literature, and while in these India reached extraordinary heights and largenesses, she could not in the outward life go beyond certain very partial realisations and very imperfect tentatives,—a general spiritualising symbolism, an infiltration of the greater aspiration, a certain cast given to the communal life, the creation of institutions favourable to the spiritual idea. Politics, society, economics are the natural field of the first two and grosser parts of human aim and conduct recognised in the Indian system. Interest and hedonistic desire: Dharma, the higher law, has nowhere been brought more than partially into this outer side of life, and in politics to a very minimum extent, for the effort at governing political action by ethics is usually little more than a pretence. The coordination or true union of the collective outward life with *moksa*, the liberated spiritual existence, has hardly even been conceived or

attempted, much less anywhere succeeded in the past history of the yet hardly adult human race. Accordingly, we find that the governance by the Dharma of India's social, economic and even, though here the attempt broke down earlier than in other spheres, her political rule of life, system, turn of existence, with the adumbration of a spiritual significance behind,—the full attainment of the spiritual life being left as a supreme aim to the effort of the individual,—was as far as her ancient system could advance. This much endeavour, however, she did make with persistence and patience and it gave a peculiar type to her social polity.”⁴

Here comes the role of future India. We must remember here that the ultimate goal of the Indian conception of life is a spiritual liberation and perfection, Moksha, and not a mental or moral perfection of Dharma. And the original collective ideal of the Vedic sages is not merely Dharma-rajya but a spiritualised society conceived as a direct expression in human life of the four-fold powers of the creative Divinity in Man. If, as the intuitive philosophers and spiritual masters of the world have repeatedly proclaimed, humanity is a single indivisible organic being and, as the ancient Vedic sages of India saw, the individual and collectivity are the equal self-expressions of an infinite eternal and universal Reality and Self, then the spiritual ideal of Moksha need not be reserved for a few exceptional individuals but becomes a definite possibility for the entire human race. Ancient India discovered the secret of individual spiritual liberation, Moksha. The future of India, to complete and fulfil her destined work and mission, has to discover the secret of collective spiritual liberation and perfection and a more integral individual spiritual liberation and perfection, not as an end in itself but as a means for the collective redemption of Mankind. This is the real Mission of India, her yet unaccomplished work, her future destiny. As Sri Aurobindo indicates:

“It is perhaps for a future India, taking up and enlarging with a more complete aim, a more comprehensive experience, a more certain knowledge that shall reconcile life and the spirit, her ancient mission, to found the status and action of the collective being of man on the realisation of the deeper spiritual truth, the yet unrealised spiritual potentialities of our existence and so ensoul the life of her people as to make it the Lila of the greater Self in humanity, a conscious communal soul and body of the Virat, the universal spirit”⁵

Here comes the importance of Sri Aurobindo's vision of future India. In his classic on Indian culture, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, Sri Aurobindo has spelled out with an unparalleled spiritual insight and vision the mission of future India and the broad lines on which the nation has to move to fulfil her destiny

The Mission of Future India

The essential principle of the ancient Indian social endeavour is a spiritual vision of life—seen and conceived in a spiritual consciousness—trying to mould society through the instrumentation of a mental and moral force and a religio-philosophic culture. This is undoubtedly a great attempt—the highest ever made and at a much higher level than the attempt of the modern pragmatic Western civilisation or even the more idealistic Graeco-Roman culture—and gave birth to the most creative and enduring culture that ever existed in history. Its ideals and values are the highest ever conceived by human mind. Its diagnosis of the human malady and the solution it offered are right in their broad and essential principles. Where then lies the cause of failure? It is in the nature of the transforming force applied on the society. Though the diagnosis is right in its essence, the force of therapy applied is not sufficiently deep, powerful and precise to cure the malady at its roots. Here comes the importance of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's spiritual vision of Transformation. Sri Aurobindo has indicated very clearly and precisely the strategic trouble-spot which is the cause of the persistent failure of all human attempts at social transformation; it is the will of the vital ego in man obstinately clinging to its desire for egocentric enjoyment and possession. The mental and moral force released by the religious, aesthetic, moral and intellectual cultures of the world is ultimately found to be too weak for the much more formidably stronger instincts and desires of the vital being in man which is the ruler of his behaviour and action in the individual and the economic, social and political life in the collectivity. This is what finally happened to the ancient Indian attempt. How to prevent this collapse again? According to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the only solution is a life-transforming spirituality which brings down a supramental spiritual consciousness and power and its direct government over the mind, life and body of the individual and the collectivity, acting directly on them and transforming human life as a whole in all the levels of its being.

This means the creation of a full-fledged spiritual culture which will give a total spiritual direction and motivation to the whole of life and to every department of life—economics, society, politics, industry, commerce, education and culture. We must remember here that this was not what was attempted or even conceived in ancient Indian civilisation. In ancient Indian culture, the ideal of spiritual perfection is reserved for the individual. For the collectivity, the highest ideal conceived is the ideal of Dharma-rajya which is the state of a harmonious society in which each individual and collectivity live in total harmony with their own typical self-nature, swadharma and in doing so in spontaneous harmony with others and the whole. Even this is only the theoretical ideal in the minds of the thinkers. For all practical purposes, what was attempted or sought to be achieved was a harmonious society regulated by the

moral and religious ideals of Dharma embodied in the shastra.

So we cannot call the ancient Indian culture an entirely “spiritual” culture. It is a religio-philosophic culture pervaded at every point by a spiritual influence created by an unbroken tradition of spiritual seeking. It is this all-pervading spiritual influence and the receptivity of the collective consciousness of the nation which constitute the uniqueness of Indian Culture

But after the Vedic and Upanishadic period the spiritual influence mostly remained either outside or behind the society and in later times even turned away from the society rejecting it as an illusion, Maya, and never took direct control of life. But this direct control of life by the Spirit is precisely what must happen to realise the ideal of “spiritualisation of the human race”. The future India, to complete and fulfil her destined mission, has to move in this direction shown by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’s vision. The spiritual consciousness should no longer remain merely as a benign influence at the apex of the cultural mind of the community but has to spring up from every section of the society—in Economy, Polity, Culture, Labour-force and the Masses—and begin to directly govern life through the instrumentation of a spiritualised mind and vital force. This means, as the Mother points out “to replace the mental government of the intelligence by the government of a spiritualised consciousness”.⁶ The first step towards this ideal will be to create in every section of the society an elite core of leadership with an intuitive spiritual intelligence.

This in short is the work which India has to do for humanity. But first India has to make a sincere attempt to realise these ideals in her own collective life and prove to the world by some concrete results the economic, social and political viability of her cultural values. For this a beginning has to be made in thought and culture to work out the developmental implications of Indian spiritual values to the modern society. The image and the vision which were held before our people during the freedom movement is the image of the enslaved Mother India to be freed from the foreign rule. The image and the vision which we who belong to modern India have to hold before us are the image and the vision of the glorified Mother India leading humanity to spiritual freedom, unity and perfection.

M. S. SRINIVASAN

References

- 1 *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 15, p 169
- 2 *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol 2, pp 292-96
- 3 SABCL, Vol 21, p 720, fn
- 4 *Ibid* , Vol 14, p 335
- 5 *Ibid* , p 336
- 6 *Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol 13, p 274

MUSINGS ON PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

(Continued from the issue of May 1996)

The Problem

Most of the problems of life and the main obstructions to our progress stem from the fact that our knowledge is not sufficiently dynamic. Generally it does not have the force and clarity to drastically change for the better our way of living. We understand many sublime truths, often ideal paths and luminous vistas are opened before our eyes, we see clearly the unrefined elements of our living and know that things must change, but find ourselves unable to effectuate these changes. A majority of human beings act fully knowing that their action is not in tune with their own highest truth or the truth of their society, religion or their soul. We try to find subterfuges to indulge our lower impulses and most often we succeed in hoodwinking ourselves.

Thus are postponed the radiant dawns of the Gods, life after life. The Lords of darkness heave a sigh of relief that they have not lost their dupes to the standard-bearers of light.

What dark necessity of the being compels the humans to turn their faces away from the Divine? what attracts them to remain entangled in the meshes of the lower forces? why do we tell lies knowingly? why do we cheat our fellow beings? why are we lazy? why are we not strong enough to scale the heights, touch the sky and bathe in the effulgences of the suns? There are high Gods ready to help us, there are soul-voices calling us back from the path of self-betrayal. Yet we are unable to come out of the rut. We hold our heads in exasperation and do not know whether to weep or laugh at the tragedy of our foolish self-indulgence.

There are two causes as to why our knowledge does not become immediately effective and trenchant enough to transform our nature. One is that we are not one person. There are many personalities jostling within us and each vies with the others to assert and fulfil itself. The mind knows the ten commandments but the emotional being conveniently forgets them when it suits its play of desires. The physical hungers sweep away our reason and we find ourselves stuck ever deeper in the morass of low living. The second cause is that mostly our knowledge and ideals are mental and the mind finds itself helpless when faced by the violent upsurges of the vital being. Unless the vital being is converted and falls in line with the lofty idealism of the mental being we are bound to lead a seesaw life of rise and fall. We take one step forward and fall two steps behind and thus are lost the rare divine moments when glory could have been ours and a decisive progress could have been made.

On December 29, 1913 the Mother wrote,

O Lord, grant that this collective convention of the ending year be for us also the occasion to put an end to a whole lot of bonds and attachments, illusions and weaknesses which have no longer any purpose in our lives. At every moment we must shake off the past like falling dust, that it may not soil the virgin path which, at every moment also, is opening before us.

May our mistakes, acknowledged and rectified within us, be no more than vain mirages powerless to bring any consequences and, pressing our foot down firmly upon all that no longer should exist, on all ignorance, all obscurity, all egoism, may we take our flight boldly towards wider horizons and intenser light, a more perfect compassion, a more disinterested love... towards Thee.

I hail Thee, O Lord, Master of our life, and I want to proclaim Thy reign over all the earth.

O Heart! Let go of the dead corpses of desires which you strive to fulfil as a habit, without even getting any joy from them. O Gods! Free us from the shackles of ordinary living. Pave our way with the stars.

*

Those

History pays homage only to those who were great or good or beautiful in some way or some field. But it has to mention those also who were cruel, destructive or diabolical, chronicle how they obstructed the march of civilization and vitiated the life of individuals and nations. Except for the great authors, poets, thinkers, philosophers, the heroes and kings and commanders and messiahs and messengers of God on the one hand and on the other their opponents, the mass of humanity lives and dies without leaving any footprints on the shores of Time. They are born in millions and perish in millions, their names are written with the ink of forgetfulness in the registers of oblivion.

It takes a long time to become a notable person, one who makes some original contribution to the sum total of earth-consciousness. From the ape to the mentally conscious man is a millennial journey. Before achieving an organised individuality, humans pass hundreds of births as amorphous masses being kneaded and baked by life and death. These resultant half-conscious entities are the stuff which is being prepared by the Lord by passing it through the crucible of manifest life.

To achieve a distinct personality which contributes to the greatness of life in any field is or should be the aim of life. To live honourably and heroically, mightily and magnanimously is a homage to Life and its Lord. To become upright and lofty, virtuous and honourable are the fruits of lives passed in cultivating one's own self and in making it a reflection of the supreme Self. On January 1, 1914 the Mother wrote,

To Thee, supreme Dispenser of all boons, to Thee who givest life its justification, by making it pure, beautiful and good, to Thee, Master of our destinies and goal of all our aspirations, was consecrated the first minute of this new year.

May it be completely glorified by this consecration; may those who hope for Thee, seek Thee in the right path, may those who seek Thee find Thee, and those who suffer, not knowing where the remedy lies, feel Thy life gradually piercing the hard crust of their obscure consciousness.

The Lord is our goal and all the goodness and virtue we have garnered on the path of life are only a preparation for this leap forward into the infinities and eternities of the Lord. That is why our compassionate Mother aspires on behalf of both the awakened and the ignorant souls. The new year is not only a point of reference in the traditional calendars of the world. We can have our own calendar which brings a new beginning each day. A new chapter can be opened by the help and Grace of the Mother every moment. Each dawn can be the outbreak of a new era, each night the epiphany of a divine fulfilment. The Mother shows us the true attitude we must keep before the Lord if we would be worthy of his compassion:

I bow down in deep devotion and in boundless gratitude before Thy beneficent splendour; in the name of the earth I give Thee thanks for manifesting Thyself; in its name I implore Thee to manifest Thyself ever more fully, in an uninterrupted growth of Light and Love.

Be the sovereign Master of our thoughts, our feelings, our actions.

Thou art our reality, the only Reality.

Without Thee all is falsehood and illusion, all is dismal obscurity.

In Thee are life and light and joy.

In Thee is supreme Peace.

This then is the secret way and the sacred goal; to find the Divine and to identify with him and ultimately to manifest him. The way is long and the journey arduous but supremely worth making. May the supreme Grace hold our hands and lead us beyond the past into the radiant future.

Silence

Sometimes in the deepening twilight listening to the gentle waves of the sea lapping the shore or sitting under the dense foliage of a tree or in a flower garden hearing the croon of bees, we suddenly, by the magic of an inner movement, enter a realm of silence. For a long or short moment, we leave behind this world of hustle and bustle to experience another Reality. When we come in contact with or enter into this Silence, the world sweeps by us in its perpetual haste,

quarrels rage nearby, a noisy discussion may go on within earshot or a cacophonous political protest group may be shouting slogans or a marriage procession with a band playing many musical instruments may pass by, yet lost in that Silence we hear nothing or even if we hear anything none of the noises distracts us from our absorption in that soothing Silence. On January 2, 1914, the Mother wrote in her diary,

This marvellous silence manifests Thee despite the mad human agitation—the immutable and constant silence so living in all things that one has but to listen to hear it, in contrast with all that is futile noise, vain agitation, useless dispersion of energies

The secret, as the Mother reveals, is in listening to it; we have but to shift the needle of our consciousness from the outer focal point to the inner and then as if all the fairy tales are superseded by the sweet reality of this *marvellous silence*, this Silence which is so invigorating and soothing, so promising and fulfilling, which can in an instant efface the wear and tear of centuries and can even physically invigorate and rejuvenate us. The Mother prays on behalf of all of us,

Let it flower in our being as a source of light and peace; may its power radiate over all in beneficent streams.

This then is a simple way to a profound experience.

To Take Stock

We human beings live as if projected outside ourselves. Mounted on a sort of merry-go-round, for a moment we flash on the scene of life then recede into the shadows and take birth again. The indefatigable Organ-Grinder incessantly turns on his grinder of life and death and sharpens our sensitivity with each turn of the wheel. The perpetual motion gives us a sense of purpose and makes us feel that we are marching somewhere, that there is an aim to this millennial labour of living, that all our activities have been useful. But our suppositions are widely off the mark. Most of our lives and life-activities are for the most part repetitive. Like children we remain busy making mud-pies. There are a few rare steps forward or upward in a whole life-time. If something is achieved in the consciousness it is almost infinitesimal. Most of our time is wasted in repetitive *bhoga*, in enjoyment of life's drama of love and hate, strife and reconciliation, success and defeat

Rarely do our souls get a chance to go forward or deeper and achieve the

desired progress. But after a thousand lives of snail's progress when the soul comes forward, the old game of life loses its charm and magic. Mud-pies do not interest us any more. We have done with *maya*, and even if not totally free of its snares, we become wary. Even if we are not fully liberated, at least we throw away the rosy glasses which made life's gifts seem so precious.

But *maya* does not give up her rule easily. It has not done with us yet. It takes other forms. The human tendency is to take extreme positions. First we embrace life too tightly, then we reject it too vehemently. Forgetting the wisdom which made Buddha advocate the middle path, we plunge into terrible austerities to storm the citadel of the Lord, to make up for lost time. This vehemence gives birth to the sattwic or virtuous ego.

An awakened soul has two things to beware of, obverse and reverse of the same coin, two poles of the same movement. One is an aggrandisement of the ego, which gives rise to the feeling, "How great am I, how grand my Tapasya!" The other is an opposite egoistic movement. We discover that the Divine is probably amused by our Herculean efforts and, however hard we may try to force his doors, the Lord will not grant us entry. Why should he? Just because one sudden morning we take notice of him and approach him in the same eager egoistic way in which we pursued the joys of life? He would unlock the doors only when we learn to search for him and seek him in the correct way and try to follow his Will, not ours. During this inevitable period of waiting for the Divine, when we discover that the Divine is deaf to our importunities, we plunge into the other abyss of ego and cry, "I am good for nothing. The Lord has rejected me. I am unworthy of him."

On January 3, 1914 in a short and simple prayer, the Mother showed us how to escape these two extremes,

It is always good to look within oneself from time to time and see that one is nothing and can do nothing, but afterwards one must turn one's eyes to Thee, knowing that Thou art all and Thou canst do all.

Thou art the life of our life
and the light of our being,
Thou art the master of our destinies.

To his chosen few the Divine allots constant failure and calumny. This in the end proves a Grace, because shorn of the sense of their greatness the devotees or the seekers are forced to realise the great Truth stated in the Mother's words and then they come to terms with themselves and accept with joy the Divine Dispensation. Destiny is no more an enigma nor an enemy. All is as it should be.

(To be continued)

SHYAM KUMARI

ENLIGHTENED INTERPRETATIONS AND POSITIVE UNDERSTANDINGS, CONDENSED

NATURE, the goddess of processes, once ignorant and mechanical, is itself now becoming Sri Aurobindo's power, because the descent of Supermind in earth has made nature aware of its origin—our Douce Mère. This awareness has begun nature's identification with the 'Mother-incarnate' on earth and is in the process of merging in the Supreme Mother that our Douce Mère is. Soon, nature will truly become 'Mother-Nature' in reality and not merely in words as it is often called.

*

Sri Aurobindo is action. He always was and will always be. The whole endless space with innumerable cosmic systems is His act. When He is totally silent His action becomes most powerful because His silence is not inactivity nor His stillness non-movement. His quietism supports His Divine activism and kinetism. He is not only action in physical space but also the divine dynamism of dimensions that are occult to our comprehension. The Mother, the Divine Mother, eternally present in Sri Aurobindo's heart, goes forth as the life-play with every act of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo projects the Mother as life and the Mother represents Sri Aurobindo in every life-form, every life-activity; She becomes time and She becomes space, for Sri Aurobindo has so willed. The Mother is the circuit in Sri Aurobindo's status as the creator—the Mother is the circuit because Sri Aurobindo's is the journey in the infinite round circle of 'time'. The Mother is the circuit because She is the sequence of changes in Sri Aurobindo's creativity. Together they act—this is their eternal play.

*

Simplicity of Sri Aurobindo's presence is in His luminous uninvolved being which brings into manifestation the existences from His unmanifest state. This luminous uninvolved being is the permanent emanation from His unmanifest state that becomes the bridge and channel between His being of unmanifest Truths and His manifested becomings. In all these three states of His, the Mother is a mysteriously mingled integral part. The sempiternal image of His uninvolved being referred to above is not cognisable by mind, is unseizable by life, is not expressible in matter.

*

Sri Aurobindo is the eternal Avatar that existed in the heart of every man as the inner divinity. His human manifestation came when the external world started the process of becoming ready to receive Him. Humanity has inherited Him inwardly but has still to accept Him outwardly. When He is accepted fully, the whole of humanity will become children of the Mother's Grace because in their origin they are indeed rays of Her Grace. Humanity will become 'Grace-filled' when the divine love, light and truth that Sri Aurobindo manifested is universally accepted.

*

Sri Aurobindo is perfect in knowledge, absolute in love and complete in will. But He is infinitely more than these three attributes. He is nameless because the infinity of His attributes is not within man's comprehension and will never be within it no matter to what stage of evolution he reaches after infinite time.

*

Sri Aurobindo is the dawn that contains boundless lights. He progressively unfolds larger and larger lights from His eternal dawn-divinity.

*

Man is a 'psychic-linked' mind, vital and body. Man's ultimate destiny is the accession of his outer person to his inner reality: that is, to the truth of his existence, namely, the psychic being. Mind, vital and body, by annexing themselves to the psychic being, have to become an integral part of the latter. The outer person's true conquest lies in this because such an annexure to the soul is not his defeat but a victory, because, if this takes place, the "outer me" shares everything of the "inner me" including the immortality of the psychic being. When man becomes a psychocised person and not only a psychic-linked individual, he ceases to be governed by Karmas. The governance then comes from man's highest self. Sri Aurobindo has given the human being a passage, a channel, a doorway, an entry avenue—the heart centre, through which one can invade one's own psychic being, and victoriously lose one's "ego-identity" in the truth of one's existence. This enlarges the boundary of our psychic being by encompassing mental, vital and physical dimensions that our "usual me" represents. Complete accession of man's "outer person" to his truth of existence within is the true starter for humanity. Humanity then would be ready to begin its journey in the "wonderlands" and "wonder-waters" of the spiritual space of Sri Aurobindo.

*

Ego is tar to spiritual aspirants. It goes on melting and sticking to aspirants in such a way that it can be cleared only by the 'solvent' of surrender.

Ego has been worshipped by generations and generations from time immemorial. Due to this worship ego has become a big, huge and vast entity that is a sort of all-pervading occupant of the subconscious. This massive entity, in its subconscious abode, when independent of the human faculties, human intelligence and human emotions which it uses, shows its true nature. Without the human vehicle, the true nature of this entity can be described as an overbearing egocentric booby. In its subconscious base, this gigantic entity has developed the capacity of constantly sending innumerable 'individual emanations' to occupy every human being. Expressing itself from the stuff of old habits registered in the subconscious memos this entity projects the past problems. It brings them to life and demonstrates them in the world through its countless extensions operating in the human race.

In the process of the purification of the subconscious, the ego's stronghold in the subconscious offers a great challenge to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Co-operation is called for from us, their children, and active participation. This entity, the overbearing egocentric booby, has been nourished by our worship and our responses. If we stop responding, the cancerous growth of this entity would be arrested, and not fed anymore by our love, it would start shrinking in its size and eventually be reduced to a non-entity.

*

To those who have put their entire trust in Sri Aurobindo, and Sri Aurobindo alone, the very best happens to them. This is so because with the unshakable confidence in His Grace, the circumstances get tuned to the individual spiritual potentialities. Needless to say that perfect peace and calmness have to be an integral part of the unshakable confidence. When we are complete in our trust and confidence in Sri Aurobindo, we are automatically turned to Sri Aurobindo in all the parts of our being. When we are so turned to Him, wonderful things happen to us; the Mother's love for Sri Aurobindo floods us, surrounds us and penetrates us. The Mother is life, and Her love then becomes our life-circumstances; for She arranges them in the light of Her love. She truly becomes the 'time' of our life. She intimately becomes 'time' in our life.

*

.On the plane close to earth, truth is growing faster and harmony increasing. This is so because the descent of ultimate supremacy, which bifurcated into Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, has, as the Supreme Divine Duo, overcome the necessity of slow ascent that demands a long time. They have brought very close

the possibility envisaged by Sri Aurobindo: “Men feel close and one.” The pressure of this possibility on earth is stirring up the chaos and calamities which are actually the result of purification processes of the subconscious.

*

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother can take complete command of our life and destiny only if we fulfil the specific demand of the Integral Yoga, namely, surrender.

Mind and the vital being live in the physical body and are identified with it. This makes mind and the vital being part of earthly life. When the sadhaka, by the skill of his psychic being, surrenders all that exists within his skull, and all that covers and is within his skeleton, to Sri Aurobindo, Sri Aurobindo in response turns His divine complexities into daily miracles, and will render invalid the word “impossible”. Needless to say the skeleton itself is not excluded from the surrender. For the being who is totally surrendered, nothing, indeed, is impossible. However surrender out of duty because it is so suggested by mental ideas may not be the correct approach. This sort of surrender has to ultimately transform into the loving surrender—the loving surrender of the helpless child.

*

Sri Aurobindo’s Bliss breaks forth and scatters as beauty all over the creation. This eternal process has no beginning and no end. The beauty so scattered vibrates in extreme subtlety the divine music of His laughter because it is His laughter that bursts His Bliss into innumerable fragments of beauty of immense varieties.

*

Our thoughts are the avenues for Sri Aurobindo to enter our brain and make His own divine foundation there. If our thoughts can catch Sri Aurobindo, our thoughts are actually caught by Him. When they develop a one-pointed mode of thinking of Him in all circumstances, divine tracks are made in our brain that join all the cells together; consequently, the brain becomes harmonious.

*

Every routine aspect of our life, that repeats itself uninterruptedly throughout, to the very end of our life, is not routine for Sri Aurobindo, because this is the life-play conceived and created by the Mother from His truth. He enjoys every routine of our life and shares its delight with those who offer these routines

to Him For those who so offer their routines, He blows all boredom out.

However, each routine of life on its highest level represents one of Sri Aurobindo's infinite Truths. Each such Truth has an infinity proper to it. When the routine becomes outdated in the forward march of evolution, it settles down in the subconscious for a long time. When the routine reaches a vanishing point in the subconscious either by non-use or by purification of the subconscious, it returns to Sri Aurobindo as an original Truth-aspect of Him. It then becomes ready for expression in manifestation as and when the Divine Mother decides to use it to give different forms and properties in Her play. Because, as aforesaid, His each Truth has infinite potentialities of manifestation proper to itself, it would never return as the same routine. The return will be in a completely different get-up, play, and in a different manifestation that may not be on routine representation. Each of His Truths is the highest heaven in context with the cosmic plan and is subject to a rebirth in the new cosmic systems when created.

*

The set-backs in sadhana are often caused because many of us in the Ashram are accustomed to private comfort zones. Conventional comforts and habits are obstacles to Sadhana. The selfish is placed before the collective interest 'Vital selfishness' or 'self-interest' constitutes "our" own private world of comfort zones.

*

The question which we must ask ourselves is whether we truly believe in our psychic capacities. Do we, or are we simply hoping that we possess them? If we believe in our psychic capacities, we must declare this to all the parts of our being. Each part must acquire a powerful conviction of the fact. Modesty has no place in such a declaration of ours to ourselves. For if modesty mixes up with our psychic talents that are trying to express themselves in response to our efforts, we shall be the losers. We may further ask whether we have faith and confidence in our individual psychic strengths for realising the ideals of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Do we firmly believe that we can successfully take up this task? Are we ready to accept this chance and challenge of a lifetime given to us by our Divine Parents? Are we ready to turn our world upside down to accomplish psychicism? Are we tough enough, are we strong enough to make the psychic rule a full success even if it comes to moving mountains of human nature in us?

We must and we shall do so because the Integral Yoga itself is a challenge. Since we have accepted to practise the Integral Yoga, we have accepted the chance and challenge offered by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother; we must

therefore prove our worth by becoming totally a psychicised personality. Once this takes place the path of the Integral Yoga becomes fairly smooth and realisation of the ideals of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo a certainty. The first challenge we are likely to encounter is in the important prerequisite that needs to sink into our brain: namely, that we have not been called here to become amateur or part-time Sadhaks. The “Call” contains the demand that we become full-time Sadhaks, round the clock, in our aim and our concepts. Full-time effort is what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother want from their children here.

There are always the exceptions. Some here are almost ready with their psychic beings nearly in front with no karmic hindrances intercepting their psychic light. Also in their own natures subconscious gravitations are absent. For these exceptions, simple, pure devotion and loving service to the Mother suffice, because they enable the Mother to arrange integral and progressive transformation of their beings. These exceptions do not form part of the adventure that most have to accept with determination in the Integral Yoga.

JAGAT KAPADIA

ON THE ASHRAM

A MYSTERY of the far future reveals its face here.
 Here is nature's game of hide-and-seek with the Divine—
 Air filled with the mystery of a world unknown,
 Peace scented with warm love of the Mother,
 Romantic sunset that lights up the sky far away,
 People who move with elegant grace and artistic expression,
 People with smiling eyes and joy in their hearts.
 Endless days of wonder we share in Your Presence.
 In Your divine light people blossom here.
 Your light fills every space
 And your radiance is reflected in all life.
 Here the worlds fall at Your feet.

DAKSHA

THE SUPRAMENTAL MANIFESTATION

29th February 1996 marked, in terms of leap years, the 10th Anniversary of the Supramental Manifestation that occurred forty years ago. In the evening of 29.2.1956, as the Mother said, “the supramental Light and Force and Consciousness rushed down upon earth in an uninterrupted flow”.

On the 23rd April, 1956, the Mother brought out a copy of the entry dated 25th September 1914 in her *Prayers and Meditations*, ending with these four lines:

“The Lord has willed and Thou dost execute:
A new Light shall break upon the earth,
A new world shall be born,
And the things that were promised shall be fulfilled.”

Then she made some changes in the text:

“29th February-29th March
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.”

The next day she said,

“The manifestation of the Supramental upon earth is no more a promise but a fact, a reality.”

So we can see that the Supramental Light and Force and Consciousness should be the things that were promised in the entry of Sept. 25, 1914.

Going back a little further, there is the well-known notation of March 30, 1914, of her first meeting with Sri Aurobindo the previous day:

“It matters little that there are thousands of beings plunged in the densest ignorance, He whom we saw yesterday is on earth; His presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light, and Thy reign shall be indeed established upon earth.”

Surely from March 29, 1914, if not from before, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had been working together for what happened on 29.2.1956.

On June 14, 1914, the Mother notes:

“It is a veritable work of creation we have to do: to create activities.

new modes of being so that this Force, unknown to the earth today, may manifest in its plenitude.... since Thou hast appointed me for the work, Thou must give me the means... Thou hast made a promise, Thou hast sent into these worlds those who can and that which can fulfil this promise.”

Three days later:

“Oh, the immensity of Thy luminous Peace!
Oh, the omnipotence of Thy sovereign Love!
And beyond all that we can imagine, the ineffable splendour of what we feel to be coming...
Enter the arena of the world, O new-born Unknown One!”

On July 5, the same year.

“Thou repliest mercifully to the call: ‘What has to be done will be done. The necessary instruments will be prepared. Strive in the calm of certitude’.”

Next day:

“Rejoice, O you who are waiting and hoping: the new manifestation is sure, the new manifestation is at hand.

The Force is here.

All nature exults and sings in gladness, all nature is at a festival: *The Force is here.*”

Still, what a toil and struggle and battle it meant for Sri Aurobindo and Sri Ma for decades thereafter, before the thing happened on 29.2.1956!

How many of us remembered it, when we celebrated the event on 29.2.96 in festive dresses and with special food?

How many of us remembered that day that we have yet to prepare ourselves to be fit channels to receive the new Light, Force and Consciousness? The rays of the new Manifestation are there indeed, and at work, but we have to open our windows to let them in.

When Mind manifested on earth, it was incumbent on humans to prepare themselves to receive it and nurture and develop it.

The Supramental Principle that has come into manifestation needs fit receptacles and mediums and channels. It is for each individual to open up and fulfil the conditions for it.

On the world level, as well, the new Principle is at work. Look at the cultural changes that are coming all over the world and look at the speed with

which the changes are coming in politics and economics. All structures made by the most developed intellects are crumbling down. And man's mind is unable to cope with the demands made on it for solutions. Nothing seems to work out.

For the call of the Time-Spirit is to do the Yoga of rising above the mind into the Spirit. And it is not an easy thing. For it means the sadhana of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

And that will be the spiritual regeneration of those who do the sadhana for it.

On 29.2.1956, Sri Ma, the Mother, was the only one who saw the manifestation of the Supermind. Among those known to her there are said to be only five who had an experience of something special happening.

And how many were there on 29.2.1996?

SHYAM SUNDER JHUNJHUNWALA

TO THE FLUTE-PLAYER OF PONDICHERRY

WHITE-FLAMED Splendour, Throb of creation!
 Thy sun-eyed Touch is delight of love
 On the waters of the Yamuna's motion
 In passions of Gopis' souls that dancing move
 In moon-orbed paths of Night,
 Reeds of riverside piping zest
 Deep in Radha's rendezvous with Light.
 From eternity to eternity thou chooseth
 A place to tryst with our aching souls—
 Denizens of mystical time-space.
 Thy Flute's call invades our pastoral goals
 In Pondicherry—thy sanctum of Ineffable Grace!
 O Star sublime of our horizon,
 And Glance ambrosial of Heaven's brow's sheen,
 Grant us thy Trysts, O Eternal Sun,
 Transfiguring in Ray-radiances earthiness without, within!

T. PRASAD

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of May 1996)

WHY did Sri Aurobindo come to Pondicherry to settle here?

Before we proceed with our narrative it would be useful to have a clear idea of the civic life of Pondicherry at that time and the dangers and hardships which he had to face from the British Police. There cannot be a more authentic record than the *Reminiscences* of Nolini Kanta Gupta, who was all along with Sri Aurobindo from November 1910 onwards except for two or three short spells of absence. We are reproducing long extracts from his book.

“Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry and took shelter here. We might say of course from another point of view that it was he who gave shelter to Pondicherry within his own consciousness. But why this city in particular? There is indeed the usual view that he retired into French territory to escape the wrath of the British bureaucracy. But actually, all he wanted was to find a quiet spot where he might give himself to his own work undisturbed.

“The place was so quiet that we can hardly imagine now what it was really like. It was not quiet, it was actually dead; they used to call it a dead city. There was hardly any traffic, particularly in the area where we lived, and after dusk there was not a soul stirring. It is no wonder they should say, ‘Sri Aurobindo has fixed upon a cemetery for his sadhana.’

“It was a cemetery indeed. Whilst the Indian nationalist movement had been flooding the whole country, nothing of that regenerating flood could find an entry here except for one or two individuals who had felt a touch. It was like a backwater of the sea, a stagnant pool by the shore. There was here no such thing as public life or youth movement or any kind of collective effort, or an experiment in educational reform,—there was no sign whatsoever of an awakening to life.

“A cemetery it was no doubt, but one with its complement of ghouls.

“In the first rank of these ghouls were the ruffian bands. Such creatures can appear only in a highly tamasic environment. For, the greater the depth of inertia the more is the need for keen rajasic excitement followed immediately by the silence of sleep. Pondicherry of those days had a still more notorious reputation for its cheap wine-shops and its rowdy tipsies. Of this type of ghouls there was a regular invasion from outside every week-end.

“The ruffian bands—known locally as ‘bandes’ in French—were a peculiar institution now almost broken up. The French regime in Pondicherry was supposed to be in theory a reign of liberty, equality and fraternity. But in actual fact, it was the feudalism of pre-Revolution France that held sway here. Or perhaps it was something worse, namely, the arbitrary rule of three or four high officials and rich men of ill-gotten means. The ‘bandes’ were in their pay and

they were there to do their bidding; the police had neither the will nor the power to intervene. On certain occasions, during the campaigns for political elections, complete anarchy seemed to reign in Pondicherry, while rioting and murder continued for days on end and blood flowed freely. People would not dare stir out of their houses, especially after dark. We were not openly involved in politics, but some of our friends were. And Sri Aurobindo would sometimes send out some of us to meet them, even after night-fall and on purpose. The local people marvelled at our dauntless courage.

“These ruffian bands—these ghouls I was going to say—turned against us too on more than one occasion. Let me explain in a little more detail.

“Soon after Sri Aurobindo came, he realised that a firm seat must be established here, an unshakable foundation for his sadhana and siddhi, for the path and the goal. He was to build up on the ever-shifting sands of the shore a firm and strong edifice, a Temple of God. Have we not read in the Puranas and other scriptures that whenever and wherever a sage or a Rishi sat down to his meditation and sadhana, there rushed upon him at once a host of evil spirits to break up his work? They seemed to have a special liking for the flesh of the Rishis

“Those who tried most to stop Sri Aurobindo from settling down and were ever on the alert to move him from his seat were the British authorities. The British Government in India could never accept that Sri Aurobindo had come away to French territory for carrying on his Yoga. Religion and spirituality, these to them were a mere subterfuge. They thought they knew what Sri Aurobindo was—the one most dangerous man in all India, the source of all the trouble. Pondicherry was the place from where were supplied the necessary instructions and advice and perhaps even the pistols and other weapons. Here was the brain-centre of the Indian independence movement. That Sri Aurobindo had been the mainspring of Indian independence they had been told by their life-instinct, although the superficial sense in which they understood it was not, obviously, the whole truth.

“... force having failed they now tried fraud. An attempt was made to frame a trumped-up charge at law. Some of the local ‘ghouls’ were made to help forge the documents—some photographs and maps and charts along with a few letters—which were to prove that we had been engaged in a conspiracy for dacoity and murder. The papers were left in a well in the compound of one of our men, then they were ‘discovered’ after a search by the police. The French police had even entered Sri Aurobindo’s residence for a search. But when their Chief found there were Latin and Greek books lying about on his desk, he was so taken aback that he could only blurt out, ‘Il sait du latin, il sait du grec!’—‘He knows Latin, he knows Greek!’—and then he left with all his men. How could a man who knew Latin and Greek ever commit any mischief?

“In fact, the French Government had not been against us, indeed they

helped us as far as they could. We were looked upon as their guests and as political refugees, it was a matter of honour for them to give us their protection. And where it is a question of honour, the French as a race are willing to risk anything; they still fight duels in France on a point of honour. But at the same time, they had their friendship, the *entente cordiale*, with Britain to maintain, and it is this that got them into a dilemma.

“In addition to force and fraud, the British Government did not hesitate to make use of temptation as well. They sent word to Sri Aurobindo, which they followed up by a messenger, to say that if he were to return to British India, they would not mind. They would indeed be happy to provide him with a nice bungalow in the quiet surroundings of a hill station, Darjeeling, where he could live in complete freedom and devote himself to his spiritual practices without let or hindrance. Needless to add, this was an ointment spread out to catch a fly and Sri Aurobindo refused the invitation with a ‘No, thank you’

“Afterwards came a more serious attack, perhaps the one most fraught with danger. The First World War was on. India had been seething with discontent and things were not going too well abroad on the European front. The British Government now brought pressure on the French: they must do something drastic about their political refugees. Either they should hand them over to the British, or else let them be deported out of India. The French Government accordingly proposed that they would find room for us in Algeria. There we could live in peace; they would see to our passage so that we need have no worry on that score. If on the other hand we were to refuse this offer, there might be danger: the British authorities might be allowed to seize us forcibly.

“I can recall very well that scene. Sri Aurobindo was seated in his room in what was later called ‘Guest House’, Rue François Martin. We too had come. Two or three of the Tamil nationalist leaders who had sought refuge in Pondicherry came in and told Sri Aurobindo about the Algeria offer and also gave a hint that they were agreeable. Sri Aurobindo paused a little and then he said, in a quiet clear tone, ‘I do not budge from here.’ To them this came as a bolt from the blue; they had never expected anything like this. In Algeria there would be freedom and peace, whereas here we lived in constant danger and uncertainty. But now they were helpless. Sri Aurobindo had spoken and they could hardly act otherwise. They had no alternative but to accept the decision, though with a heavy heart.

“Sri Aurobindo was in Pondicherry for forty years. The first few years were spent in establishing a seat; he had to select a suitable spot and make a permanent abode where he could work undisturbed. This point about selecting a ‘seat’ occurs in the story of all great spiritual aspirants and in all the disciplines. The Tantriks had need of their ‘seat of five skulls’, *pañcamundī*. Ramakrishna had his *pañcamuṇḍī*, the grove of five banyans. But why this insistence on five? Perhaps the number stood for the five main elements in man and the five worlds

that constitute the universe,—what the Upanishads term body, life, mind, supermind and spirit. The Vedas too speak of *pañcakṣiti*, the five abodes, *pañcakṛṣṭi* the five fields of culture, *pañcajanma*, the five births or worlds Sri Krishna's conch of *pañcajanya* may well occur to the mind. Lord Buddha too when he took his seat under the Bodhi tree is supposed to have said, 'I do not rise from this seat until my aim is attained, even though the body dry up or fall', *ihāsane śusyatu me śarīram*.

"The site once chosen and the seat established, Sri Aurobindo had now to prepare the ground. There were, as I have said, shifting sands all around symbolising a changing world where all is in a state of flux, *yat kiñca jagatyām jagat*. All that had to be cleared and firm ground reached. He spent many long years, even as Agastya had done, in this spade-work. For he was to erect a huge edifice, a Temple dedicated to God. He had once dreamed of a Temple for Bhawani, Bhawani Mandir, where he would install Mother India. Now too he desired the same thing. A Temple for Bhawani, a Temple-city in fact

"That needed a solid, firm and immovable foundation. For this he had to dig into the farthest abyss, to fix, one might say, the 'five supporting pillars'. All this he did single-handed during the first four years, from 1910 to 1914. Then the Mother came. And although that was for a short time, it was then that the plans were clearly laid for the thing that was to be and the shape it was to take,—this New Creation of theirs.

"The work of building the foundation took him till 1920. From 1920 to 1926 he worked with the Mother in giving it strength, testing it and making it fit and adequate for carrying the future load. In 1926 there began the construction of the superstructure, and along with that proceeded the work of installing the presiding Deity. This work of installation took twelve years to complete and the next twelve were given to making it permanent. His task done, Sri Aurobindo stepped aside, for a new task, for taking up another line of work. But to this foundation he lent the entire strength of his bare back, that his work and new creation should stand immortal and with his head erect."¹

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

Reference

1 *Reminiscences*, by Nolini Kanta Gupta, K S Amrita, pp 42-9

THE BATTLE AT HAND

WE have come full circle and are in the midst now of a formidable battle. Centuries ago India had opened her gates to the British, had been utterly subdued by them, and only with the birth of beings such as Rammohan Roy, Dayanand, Bankim Chandra, Ramakrishna, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Vivekananda, and Sri Aurobindo, rose again through the fire of their tapasya into a nation flaming with cries and the final reality of Independence.

We face again a battle which demands every bit of courage that was possessed by those formidable and God-inspired beings. Our battle is not against the British or any other foreign power, but against our very own flesh and blood, our very own brothers and sisters—children of the same Mother, who have become enamoured of personal power and wealth and forget what it is to be Indian.

India must rise, for it is her Divine Destiny to be the leader amongst nations, to shower her wisdom on and unite the four corners of our world, and to usher in the growing Godhead. India, the land of the living Word, the land of Rishis and great souls, the executrix and living power of God, was not meant to wallow in the utter pettiness and cowardice that many of her children are displaying today.

It is not by their personal wealth or power that her children will be judged but by their ability to sacrifice themselves for the greatness of the Mother.

As a people we had been ground into the dust and plundered for centuries. No wonder we lost all self-esteem, pride in our heritage, and ability to stand like men. Instead, we have emulated without question the practices and ideologies of the West and even in this day and age, after having received those flaming pioneers into the heart of our country, look admiringly and with a sense of wonder toward the Western nations.

But those flaming pioneers did not come here in vain. They ignited the fire of Indian Nationalism, taught many to recognize the Truth of their being, the secret Deity in each and every heart, and to seek guidance from there alone, so that the growing Godhead may spread its presence and manifest itself through conscious beings to finally uplift the entire human race.

Politics today is a game of corruption and deceit. It is the child of petty satisfactions and not, as it should be, the midwife of the ever-emerging Godhead. Parties grab votes by instigating religious differences. Some of these parties refer to themselves as Nationalist. Yet they have not the slightest idea of what it means to be a Nationalist. A Nationalist is one whose only aim is the victory and government of the Great Mother. A Nationalist is one to whom country comes first, and self second. A Nationalist is one who is willing and able without any qualm to throw himself into the national fire of aspiration. A Nationalist is one who has recognized the true mission of India and is not willing

to desecrate or compromise her spirit in any way.

The spirit of India is the spirit of unity through diversity. It is the spirit of all that is noble, heroic and divine. An utter inconsistency and sheer misunderstanding of this spirit is being displayed by many of today's politicians and parties. Parties are clamouring for the Hindu vote when, in essence, being Hindu means having a respect, understanding and openness towards every other religion. For is not God infinite? And are not the number of faces and ways He shows us also infinite? What gives one of His faces precedence over another?

Hinduism is a Dharma and a universal way of being in which all religions and viewpoints meet and combine to form a more dynamic and living synthesis. To cast Hindus against Muslims is the play of ignorant individuals who are prompted by entirely selfish and un-Indian motives and spirit. India will not be ruled by this creed. These parties may win an election or two, but it will be only to sift out this poisonous strain from the rest of the Indians. It will be only so that all other Indians become aware of this coterie of Indians who would slay their own Mother to fulfil their petty aims and personal satisfactions.

In some sense we have even to thank these traitors. For they are performing the work of separating the chaff from the wheat. By calling attention to their motives, selves, and pylons of misrule, they are preparing the rest of India to develop the strength and nobility of character to finally overcome them. By drawing attention to themselves they are preparing for that day when the true children of India shall rise and strike them down with God's own lightning. For they, of course, are the chaff. And a country destined to lead the world cannot have such as they at the helm. When India does reach that inevitable position, her leaders must be those souls who care not for themselves but for the greatness of their Mother alone and for the unrestricted blossoming of her Divine Destiny.

These same parties and politicians would also reverse development in India by turning away foreign companies who are investing in India. When the British ruled India it was necessary to boycott their goods and instead develop indigenous industry because the British had no intention of developing India for India's sake, but developed her in only those narrow paths that would lead to Britain's own commercial enrichment. Political power rested in their hands and they used it to rape India

Today, however, Indians control India. It is not a foreign race but the children of India who are governing her. The threat therefore of foreign commercialism exploiting India is invalid. The government can and has laid down stipulations demanding that foreign companies develop Indian infrastructure, hire locally, use local suppliers and distribution channels in conducting their business.

The result of such stipulations is that local employment rises, local wages increase, local infrastructure develops either because foreigners apply pressure on the government so that they may operate in conditions more as in their home

countries, or they develop it themselves. Vaster amounts of money are released and used for the needed development of the local people and environment. Where this does not happen, there the government needs to apply the necessary policies to ensure that it does. In general, everyone has something to gain from foreign investment. The foreign companies manufacture their product, most likely, at a lower cost, and find an immediate market comprised of India's burgeoning middle class. The middle class now have a wider range of products to choose from at a more affordable rate. Local people develop their talents in different ways through working for corporations in capacities they may not have worked in before, and India as a whole engages in an active and living dialogue with the rest of the world, imbibing therefore its manifold impulses while her own spirit simultaneously begins to spread abroad.

Yet these same parties who would separate the Hindus from the Muslims to gain the Hindu or the Muslim vote, will also with the same perverse motive push investment away because it supposedly hurts local capabilities. Thus ventures such as the one between Tata's and Singapore Airlines are stalled because there is a perceived threat to indigenous airlines. On the contrary, such ventures would instigate competition and force Indian companies to operate on world standards. There is enough money, power, knowledge, and ability in India so that every kind of venture imaginable can be undertaken and become successful if it is conducted in the right spirit.

The doors of India have opened now so that India may once again receive all the world-impulses and synthesize them into her great spirit. India has existed for millennia. Centuries ago aspects of her being went forth into the world and developed entire countries in the East and West. The aspect of unity, for instance, travelled from India to the West, was resurrected in Christianity, and resulted in the formation of Christian nations. Through the ages these very countries then cast their gaze back toward India and knocked again at their master's doors. Some forcibly entered her and thought themselves her rulers. Providence had made her conquest possible so that under the guise of being her leader they might again receive some impulse to guide them through the following centuries. In this day and age India receives the world again. Those forms, manifest now as multinational corporations, seek again to return into the Ocean of creativity to be assimilated, greatened, and cast forth in some other, diviner mould.

India exists not for India's sake alone, but for the world's. Her indigenous industries must become world-class, just as all her other powers must, and that is not going to happen under this misguided protectionism being preached by our shortsighted, vote-seeking politicians.

Policies to banish Muslims from some parts of the country, to attack Hindu pilgrims in another, to abort much-needed infrastructure development, to cast out world-class companies, to abort even joint ventures, are motivated by

personal reasons and will be looked back upon as nothing more than the actions of a few who are destined to become extinct, in the annals of history.

Of necessity another group will rise. These will be the people sickened by the continued misrule and petty motives of today's leaders. These will be the children of God who follow no other impulsion than the voice of the Mother—modern Rishis, whose very meaning will be to carry out the Divine Decree and manifest here in matter the life divine. To adapt a line from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, God shall grow up while the wise politicians talk and sleep.

PRAVIR MALIK

DON'T REGRET

DON'T regret
 Those long moments when you lay bleeding
 On the torture-filled bed of life-thorns,
 Aware and alive still was that faint glow
 Of faith that kept burning
 The inner flame within dark fields.

Retrieve all lost woes and pains,
 Forgotten joys and moments of bliss
 When you were a cascade of love and cheer,
 Recall while tranquil;

The past is never erased
 Until lived again and again
 For the little dwarf in your depths
 To extract its essence and grow till
 Its shine seeps into every cell
 Of your body, your heart and your mind.

Pains and pleasures are the dust
 Of what was once pure joy,
 From that dust is baked
 The bricks of tomorrow's bliss.

DINKAR D. PALANDE

A STUDY OF *BHAWANI MANDIR*

SRI AUROBINDO'S revolutionary pamphlet, *The Bhawani Mandir*, illuminates the concept of the collective strength of the people of India as the *shakti* of our motherland. This pamphlet was written probably in 1905 and brought into the limelight by the Rowlatt Committee. Sri Aurobindo probably derived the basic conception of the scheme of constructing a temple for goddess Bhawani at some secret place from Bankim Chandra's *Ananda Math*. Subscribing to the age-old system of the mother-worship cult in India, Sri Aurobindo conceives of Bhawani as the Mother of Strength, the pure *shakti*. As the Children of Mother Bhawani, the people of India are called upon to work together for her sake, to make India free from the shackles of British rule.

During the revolutionary period Sri Aurobindo came to realise intensely the plight of India, our motherland. To him the country is not merely a geographical entity; she is a living mother. The image of the motherland as his human mother occurs in one of Sri Aurobindo's letters to Mrinalini, his wife:

...whereas others regard the country as an inert object, and know it as the plains, the fields, the forests, the mountains and rivers I look upon my country as the mother, I worship her and adore her as the mother.¹

There is a popular dictum: *Jananee janmabhumischa swargadapi gariyasee*, that is, mother and motherland are even greater than heaven. Sri Aurobindo conceives of India as a human mother who is potentially also known as the *shakti* of the nation and named by him Bhawani Bharati. The *shakti*, Bhawani Bharati, is the living unity of the millions of people of India

The Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, also emphasises Sri Aurobindo's idea of the nation as *shakti* in an illuminating article, "Soul of India", written in August 1947 at the time of India's historic achievement of independence from the British rule:

A nation is a living personality, it has a soul, even like a human individual. The soul of a nation is also a psychic being, that is to say, a conscious being, a formation out of the Divine Consciousness and in direct contact with it, a power and aspect of *Mahashakti*. A nation is not merely the sum total of the individuals that compose it, but a collective personality of which the individuals are as it were cells, like the cells of a living conscious organism.²

Goddess Bhawani is portrayed by Sri Aurobindo as the Mother of Strength who reveals herself through tremendous force, power, love and knowledge: "[Bhawani is] the Infinite Energy, which streams forth from the Eternal".³ She steers the unending courses of revolutions of the world. Sri Aurobindo spells out the various aspects through which the Infinite Energy manifests Itself:

Sometimes She is Love, sometimes She is Knowledge... sometimes She is Pity. This Infinite Energy is Bhawani, She is also Durga, She is Kali, She is Radha the Beloved, She is Lakshmi, She is our Mother and the Creatress of us all.⁴

Sri Aurobindo conceives of the whole world growing full of the Mother as *shakti*. The *shakti* of war, the *shakti* of wealth, the *shakti* of science are becoming mighty, fierce and rapid. Sri Aurobindo attributes the cause of the prevailing plight of India to the indifference of the people towards *shakti*, hence the *shakti* has abandoned the people. The people of India possess dead knowledge, a slow poison that is corroding them. Considering the plight of the country, the greatest need of India is spiritual regeneration. There is no scientific process or technological device to change the nature of the people. To regenerate the people, says Sri Aurobindo, strength can only be created by drawing it from the inexhaustible reservoir of the spirit, from the *Adya Shakti*. To be born again is to revive the *Brahman* within the people. The spirit within is the true source of strength. The *Brahman* is the ocean of spiritual force. One can mark Sri Aurobindo's strong belief in spirituality even in those days of his hectic political activities.

Sri Aurobindo's blueprint to build a temple for goddess Bhawani, the Mother of Strength, the Mother of India, is aimed at making it a sacred centre from which Her force is to flow over the country. What the people of India at the time of their struggle for independence needed most was *shakti*, adoration of *shakti*. People ought to strive hard to acquire strength—strength mental, strength moral, strength physical and above all strength spiritual which is inexhaustible and imperishable. Those who desire to liberate the country can derive necessary strength and courage from goddess Bhawani, the Mother of Strength. They have to renounce all comforts and pleasure in family life. It is renunciation and self-sacrifice that strengthen one's inner power. As it has been pointed out by Sri Aurobindo—strength is to be derived from the *Brahman* within.

Sri Aurobindo draws the attention of the people to the instance of the sudden and marvellous upsurging of strength of the people of Japan cited in the pamphlet on Bhawani Mandir. Their inexhaustible strength was drawn from their religion. The national *shakti* of Japan was worshipped in the image and person of the Mikado who enabled the little island to wield successfully the stupendous tools of Western knowledge and science. The exemplary rise of the national *shakti* of Japan was to inspire the people of India to adore the *shakti* of the nation so as to drive away the British Government from India.

The people of India must adore the Mother of Strength to mobilise strength and resources in their epic struggle against the British. It is the grace of Bhawani which can emancipate the nation from “the magic circle of *tamas*, the self-indulgent inertia and ignorance” because when the Mother of Strength is properly adored She passes like fire into the brains and hearts of Her worship-

pers and imparts to them adamant strength and courage. The ordinary law of the universe is that the gods do not give themselves unasked—"Even the eternal comes not unawares upon men."⁵

The hundred million people of India are the living *shakti* of the Almighty. We are all gods and creators. To preserve India is also an act of creation. India is "decayed, bloodless and lifeless, too weak to recover". Such foolish ideas are entertained by us because our ability to feel, our will and actions are paralysed by senile sluggishness, timidity and feebleness. Sri Aurobindo makes a pertinent remark: "No man or nation need be weak unless he chooses, no man or nation need perish unless he deliberately chooses extinction."⁶

The choice is left with us whether to create a nation out of this sluggishness and morass or perish. Viewed from her past history, it is believed that India cannot perish. With his prophetic vision Sri Aurobindo carves out a high destiny for India in the history of the world:

...our race cannot become extinct, because among all the divisions of mankind it is to India that is reserved the highest and the most splendid destiny, the most essential to the future of the human race. It is she who must send forth from herself the future religion... which is to harmonise all religion, science and philosophies and make mankind one soul.⁷

In order to be fit channels of the goddess Bhawani's *shakti* for India's spiritual regeneration, we have to create strength, to change our nature and become new men with new hearts. Spiritual energy is the source of all our strength. A temple consecrated to Mother Bhawani has to be built in a place far from the contamination of modern cities. A new order of *karmayogins* will be attached to the temple because adoration of the Mother without *karma*, cannot be perfect unless based upon *jnana*. The mighty formula of the Vedanta, *so'ham*, will be the basis of their knowledge.

A *matha* attached to the temple will train the *Brahmacharins*. The need for creation of a new order of *Brahmacharins* is emphasised by Sri Aurobindo:

We need a nucleus of men in whom the *shakti* is developed to its uttermost extent, in whom it fills every corner of the personality and overflows to fertilize the earth. These, having the fire of Bhawani in their hearts and brains, will go forth and carry the flame to every nook and cranny of our land.⁸

The appendix attached to the pamphlet clearly delineates the rules of conduct to be observed by the *Brahmacharins*, the specific task to be performed and their future line of action. The *Brahmacharins* will be guided by philanthropic motives to elevate the economic and social conditions of the poor people. They will undertake works of public charity and beneficence. They will engage themselves in mass instruction programmes, in various ways organising night

schools, nursing the sick and spreading religious teachings. Some *Sannyasins* will be sent to foreign countries to acquire technical knowledge so that on their return they can establish factories and workshops in our country and thus help in industrialisation. Moreover the *Sannyasins* will help to improve the image of India in the outside world and project the value of the Arvan race.

Others will be sent to travel through various countries on foot, inspiring by their lives, behaviour and conversation, sympathy and love for the Indian people in the European nations and preparing the way for their acceptance of Aryan ideals.⁹

Viewed from various angles Sri Aurobindo makes a marvellous blend of religion and politics in the *Bhawani Mandir*. It is written to arouse the supine religious beliefs of the people of India for political purposes. Since religion forms a fundamental basis of our national life, through religious indoctrination important political gains can be achieved. The pamphlet spells out in unambiguous terms Sri Aurobindo's political commitments accompanied by his religious beliefs of those days which were of course radically changed in his later life at Pondicherry.

As a piece of political prose the pamphlet is replete with patriotic thoughts and feelings. It is packed with fiery sentences and a theological tone is maintained throughout. Long sentences are broken up with commas to provide a rhythmic effect. Though the Appendix is dry prose, the rest of the pamphlet emanates poetic charm.

It is a type of psychological motivation to dedicate oneself in the service and worship of the motherland, Bhawani Bharati. One has to dedicate one's life for the country as a devotee surrenders himself totally without any reserve to the Mother. Thus the motive of political liberation is tinged with religious fervour in order to attract a larger number of theists.

The *Gita's* teaching of divine love and devotion, in which knowledge and works become one in supreme unification, finds reverberations in the three ways Sri Aurobindo mentions of *Bhakti*, *Jnana* and *Karma* for the Mother's works. Though the blueprint for a temple consecrated to the Mother Bhawani never saw the light of the day in print, it definitely alerted the British rulers to bring Sri Aurobindo's activities under strict surveillance. As it appears in this pamphlet, Sri Aurobindo's professed aim was to establish a theocratic state based on Hindu philosophy. It was the first attempt of a religious uprising on the lines of religious fundamentalism but with no trace anywhere of religious intolerance.

SABITA TRIPATHY
NANDAKISHORE MISHRA

Notes

- 1 A B Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo* (Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1958), rpt 1960, p 101
- 2 Quoted from *The Advent* (Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, August 1947), pp 129-30
- 3 A B Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, p 84
- 4 *Ibid* , p 84
- 5 *Ibid* , p 90
- 6 *Ibid* , p 88
- 7 *Ibid* , p 89
- 8 *Ibid* , p 93
- 9 *Ibid* , p 97

THE END OF FAITH

FAITH is the substance of things hoped for,
the evidence of things unseen.
“Faith is not,” they say,
“seeing but believing.” But I have seen
a Light far brighter than the light of day.

Yes, I have seen the golden future
hovering above, within us
like a world half hatched,
sometimes revealed, but mostly hidden
by a mind slow and densely thatched.

Yet once revealed by Love and Truth and Light
This world’s refashioned by a greater soothsight.

Then earth’s asworn and yearning
for fulfilment of her destined glory,
that whispered a subtly murmured
hardly-dared-for story

which now’s but dimly scried
in crystal ball,
and dream and memory of things to come.
How yet we spin vertiginously towards it.
After aeons of weary trudging
now that it is all in sight
We can glance back with looks ungrudging.
There is a sense of Spring
as heavy-handed Yama steals away,
that first fresh woodland breath
that gives the lie to death.

Then will faith be for all time dead
when on the rim of earth appears
Savitri to light up truth
that lay forever in the shadows.
Then will faith be for all time dead
even as Love’s flame burns up our sorrows

MAGGI

PU CHAO AND THE MARVELLOUS FUTURE

UNDER the headline “Monk’s Body Intact” a major Indian newspaper carried the following story a couple of years ago:

“Tens of thousands of pilgrims from all over the island have been streaming to the Sonohara Kunchen Temple of Taiwan to view the body of Pu Chao, a Buddhist monk who died eleven years ago at the age of ninety-three. His disciples having been instructed in their dreams not to disturb it, Pu Chao’s body remains in the cave behind the temple where he passed away while seated in meditation. Once a week the body is cleaned with a damp cloth. The muscles have not stiffened and there is no sign of decay.”

This remarkable story was accorded all of a two-inch-by-two-inch column on an inside page of the reporting paper—about the same space and placement generally given to reports of minor officials inaugurating minor buildings in obscure places, or perhaps of a man somewhere biting a dog. It deserved better.

The story of Pu Chao’s body recalls to us the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. In contrast to many religious viewpoints which hold that the body must be mortified and finally abandoned to effect spiritual passage, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother tell us that it is the body’s destiny to fully participate in the spiritual life, and they declare an “integral” spirituality, which will embrace and transform all aspects of existence and all parts of the being, to be the central truth of the next stage of evolution. The transformed body of their vision is an entity immune by its very nature to the forces of disease, of decay, of death itself.

The body’s present subjection to these forces, the Mother mentioned, while apparently inevitable, was actually the result of an implacable habit of the cells rooted in the primal nescience of matter but, nonetheless, ultimately a *habit* and therefore capable of being changed.

The very first of the ennobling conditions of such change, however, involves the breaking of other habits, notably the mind’s habitual, unchallenging acceptance of the so-called “laws of nature”. In a true consciousness such laws’ pretensions to being ineluctable principles of existence would appear absurd and ridiculous and would crumble away, losing their compelling power over the physical and allowing it to receive more directly influences from higher, “supramental” planes of consciousness.

Had something like Pu Chao’s body emerged from the lab of some multinational drug company as the fruit of some suitably expensive research project, it would have been front page news in every newspaper on the planet. But what could happen in a cave that would be of interest to anyone but cavemen? One can almost hear the editor chuckling as he looks for a suitable spot to bury Pu Chao’s story.

And yet, are not “spiritual phenomena” such as levitation, media, luminosity, and now Pu Chao’s undecaying body, phenomena far more likely to be encountered in a yogi’s cave than in a scientist’s laboratory, that truly foreshadow what is to be and, in forcing the mind beyond its sterile dualities of “possible” and “impossible”, hasten us towards that marvellous future?

MAGGI and MICHAEL

BOATMAN

O BOATMAN, listen,
 This world is full of illusions.
 To you nothing belongs;
 Whom you think today too close
 Will leave you on the pyre tomorrow,
 all alone.

This world-ocean is fathomless
 And your boat is so small;
 There will be high tides and hurricanes,
 Dark clouds will cover all;
 When your little boat will sink
 in the whirlpool,
 Who shall come to your call?
 From where have you come,
 and where will you go;
 which country is your abode?
 Your wealth, your pride and power
 Will not accompany you to the other world.

If you want to cross
 This mortal ocean
 Remember the name of the Lord;
 Keep it ever in your heart.

JYOTSNA MOHANTY

AN INVOCATION

WHAT good deeds of past lives have given me this unique opportunity, O Mother Divine, to come and stay in your Ashram and participate in the Divine Event you have envisaged? Let me not misuse this wonderful chance or lose it by my own foolishness.

When my mind falters and hesitates and doubts, O Mother All-Gracious! let me hold tight its bridle or else life is a disgrace.

When my reason tries to justify, criticise or judge, let me not forget that even a leaf cannot fall without your sanction, O Mother All Mighty! Let me plunge and concentrate one-pointedly in your service and get the Light and Delight of disinterested Divine Work.

When an inert passivity comes with the knowledge that you take care of my material needs and have surrounded me with your love, O Mother All-Loving! let me not take these for granted and run after wealth, power or position and waste my life and energy in these transitory and futile pursuits.

When my vital being gets emboldened and asserts itself with the wrong notion that your protection will always be there whatever I may do, O Mother All-Protector! let not my ego under that “false and indolent expectation” take freedom as licence and be forgetful of the spiritual consequences.

When surrendering my past, present and future into your hands I plunge in a hypocritical, false, tamasic self-giving, O Mother, full of Grace! let an unfailing aspiration rise up from within and stir me up to a vibrating, genuine, all-covering surrender and let my being float in that one blissful grace of a true, consecrated life.

When I am faced with difficulties and disasters, let me not shrink away with fear but march on towards the goal, O Mother, my Examiner! aren't these obstacles there to test my preparedness and make me aware of my weaknesses?

When I falter and am left behind, let me trudge on all alone “armoured against all fear, peril and disaster”, O Mother Ever-Watchful! aren't you waiting patiently for me to arrive? Let me not despair and stray away from the path.

When I am hurt and silent tears fill my eyes and my heart weeps in agony, O Mother All-Compassionate! aren't you there to wipe away my tears and soothe my aching heart to ecstasy?

When hostile forces attack and tempt me and poison my mind and life, let me never, even for a moment, doubt you, O Mother All-Forgiveness! aren't you there veiled and guiding my life from behind?

You, in your human body, are the Universal Mother. Your eyes are the fountains of compassion, your feet the refuge of peace. Where will I get these in this world or other worlds, O Mother, my Only Refuge? Let me not waver from the path and while away my time in “laziness, unwillingness to change” and vegetate.

O Mother Supreme! Destroyer of falsehood and evil, Harbinger of Satya Yuga and the Supramental World!

Holding your flag firmly in both hands let us march on boldly as Warriors of the Future and sing, with joy and confidence, the song of your Victory. Let the true life be:

THE LIFE DIVINE.

KRISHNA CHAKRAVARTI

THE SOLAR ECLIPSE ON MY BIRTH-DAY

As the face of the Sun the Moon was covering
 And the Earth was gradually deeper darkening
 Suddenly there came a pale-golden glint,
 Dawn and the dusk mingled in a silver tint.
 Cawing crows, floating birds and the coldish air
 Transformed the Earth that looked like a bride fair.
 Crowned was the Sun with its dazzling glitter
 And behold! on the eastern sky the bright solitary star;
 Truth was hidden, Truth is up, it was always there.

The Sun and the Moon and the twinkling stars,
 They've known each other for billions of years;
 So too the Earth and the Moon as each other they cross
 On their way round the Sun for aeons and aeons.
 While passing by the Sun the Moon on its path
 At the right hour with its penumbra darkens the Earth.

Analysing the cause is a rational, scientific pleasure,
 But man's root in Moon-dream, Sun-worship and Love's flower
 Is beyond the reason's horizon, beyond the mind's measure.

AJU MUKHOPADHYAY

A PLUNGE INTO THE UNKNOWN

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE UNEXPECTED

(14)

THE New year Message of 1956 runs:

The greatest victories are the least noisy.

The manifestation of a new world is not proclaimed by beat of drum.

ON 5 January 1955 in the Playground class a student asks the Mother whether the possibility of transformation will be delayed if we are not able to win the victory.

The Mother answers: Delayed perhaps by several centuries. This is precisely what the adverse forces are trying to bring about, and so far they have always succeeded—in putting off the thing.... And this is what they want to try to do once again. Perhaps all this is decreed somewhere. It is possible. But it is also possible that though it is decided, in order that the thing may take place as it ought to it is not good to reveal what is decided.... So if one knew ahead exactly what was going to happen, one would remain seated, quietly, and would do nothing any longer.... That is why one does not know. But he who can act in all circumstances in full knowledge of the cause, knowing what the result of his action will be, and at the same time can do a certain thing which is sometimes even in contradiction with this result, that person indeed can know... unless one has a very great ideal before him and the hope of realising it, one doesn't put out all the energies of the being and therefore does not do what is necessary to attain even the nearest goal...

The last sentence uttered by the Mother holds good at least in my case. And that is why Sri Aurobindo and the Mother decided not to make me an ashramite till I made the needed progress. This is very clear to me at least now. On 4 January 1956 the Mother was asked if the 1st January message implied that there would be great victories that year.

The Mother: This means perhaps something very simple: that it is better to let things happen without speaking about them.... Otherwise it becomes what I call "beat of drum", what could be called publicity.

... Wait, at least we should get a surprise!...

Yes, in our higher being we can have a very clear, very exact, very luminous perception of what it is. But if one comes down into the material consciousness,

one has to say, “Well, I know nothing about it.” When it is there, I shall tell you what it’s like—and probably I won’t even need to tell you, you will be able to see it. I hope you will be among those who are able to see it. For, there again, there are some who won’t be able....

Naturally, if all of a sudden there were luminous apparitions or the outer physical forms changed completely, well then, I think even a dog or a cat or anything whatsoever would notice it. But that will take time.... Many great things will take place before that, and they will be much more important than that, mark my words....

Question: If there is some manifestation, will it be purely spiritual, that is, will only those who do yoga be able to perceive it, or will there be any consequences in the world of facts?

The Mother: My child, why do you put this in the future?

There have already been, for years, extraordinary, fantastic consequences in the world. But to see this, one must have a little knowledge; otherwise one takes them for quite normal and ordinary things—because one doesn’t even know how they happen....

An action in the world?—It is constant. It is something which spreads and acts everywhere, gives out everywhere new impulsions, new orientations, new ideas, new acts of will—everywhere. But still, as one does not see how it happens, one thinks it “quite natural”, as they say.

It is quite natural, but with another naturalness than that of ordinary physical Nature ..

The world will go on. Things will happen And perhaps there will be a handful of men who will know how they were done. That’s all....

There is a short preliminary passage which is indispensable, and those who have made this little preliminary journey, well, there are all sorts of things, all sorts of speculations and questions which they can no longer ask themselves....

... I haven’t said anything but this: “It is better not to speak about it...” Now, there are people who need a little whipping, as one whips cream. But they should go to the poets, not come to me... I would rather act than speak.

On 6 January 1956 the Mother distributed the following message:

Give all you are, all you have, nothing more is asked of you but also nothing less.

I started thinking—what is it that I have not given to the Mother? Whatever money I have, I have deposited in the Ashram Cashier’s office. The moment the Mother makes me an Ashramite I shall offer all, and shall not keep a single pie

for me. And what I am I have also offered to her. Then? As I deliberated on the question, gradually I came to understand that I had not yet given up my pride—the pride of being a good man, a just man.

From my childhood I had the ambition of being a good man, a just man. I had a very good name in our family. Even the servants called me a good boy, very calm and quiet, never disturbing others. Even at school, whether in Calcutta or Santiniketan, I had a good name among teachers and friends. Thus I developed a ‘sattwik ahamkara’ in me, the virtuous man’s egoism. Now I realised that this ‘ahamkara’ too had to be sacrificed at the feet of the Divine. Otherwise, at least Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga was not possible. And after ‘sattwik’ comes ‘adhyatmic ahamkara’ (spiritual ego). For a sadhak of the integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo the path is infinitely more difficult than that of the old schools of yoga. So my struggle continued.

Now, on the message mentioned above a question is asked in the Mother’s Playground class on 11.1.56—What is meant by “all you have” and “all you are”?

The Mother replies: I am going to tell you in what circumstances I wrote this...

Someone wrote to me saying that he was very unhappy, for he longed to have wonderful capacities to put at the disposal of the Divine, for the Realisation, for the Work; and that he also longed to have immense riches to be able to give them, to put them at the feet of the Divine for the Work. So I replied to him that he need not be unhappy, that each one is asked to give what he has, that is, all his possessions whatever they may be, and what he is, that is, all his potentialities—which corresponds to the consecration of one’s life and the giving of all one’s possessions—and that nothing more than this is asked....

Those who live the ordinary life, well, if they make a gesture of goodwill, so much the better for them, this creates for them antecedents for future lives. But it is only from the moment you say, “There, now I know that there is but one thing which counts for me, it is the divine life, and I want to live the divine life”—from that moment one asks you, not before....

But this is not for lazy folk. It’s for people who like progress. Not for those who come and say, Oh! I have worked hard in my life, now I want to rest, will you please give me a place in the Ashram?” I tell them, “Not here. This is not a place for rest... this is a place for working even harder than before.”... so I send them to the Himalayas; I tell them, “Go and sit before the eternal snows! That will do you good.”

Throughout January and February 1956 I went through a severe inner struggle. The hostile forces often advised me to go to some other ashram in the Himalayas. They said that Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga was not meant for me. A severe

inner tension was going on throughout the period January-February, 1956.

On 24.2.56 I wrote a Bengali song which could be adapted thus in English:

If I get a place at Thy lotus feet, O Mother Divine!

I am not going to the Himalayas.

When the nectar-flow from Thy heart of Love quenches my thirst,

Why should I go drinking pilgrimage-water from place to place?

When I hear Thy Voice sonorous,

I forget all 'bhajans' and 'keertans' in the temples.

When the cataracts of Thy Grace divine wash out all my dirt

Why should I go to the Ganges for a holy dip?

If my heart is filled with the gift of Thy Light,

If my life overflows with the cascade of Thy Love,

If I get the 'Sun of Truth' upon this very earth,

I won't crave for the high heavens of the gods.

There had been many a psychological crisis in my sadhana during my four-year stay at Golconde (and even after that period). In one such critical moment when I was preparing to leave the Ashram, all of a sudden my psychic being came forward, took up my pen and wrote, using my hands, a small poem addressing the Mother thus (adapted from the Bengali original):

Oh Mother!

Does all end in a stark failure?

Why then is this aspiration towards the Highest?

Why then was all that persistent and anxious effort?

Why these sorrows and sufferings?

All meaningless?

The result was—I changed my mind once again and gave up my idea of leaving the Ashram. Such a crisis came again and that is why on 24.2.56 I wrote the poem mentioned earlier. And every time I got an inner response and a push towards a new realisation of a novel experience.

On 29.2.56, the last day of the scheduled fourteen months, predicted by the Mother to be a specially difficult period, after my breakfast I was loitering by the seaside and trying to imagine what might happen that day. My vital mind played with some fantastic ideas but my reasoning mind was quiet and said, "Let us wait and see." All of a sudden from the core of my being an aspiration rose higher and higher and still higher. Soon a response came from above with the inspiration of a poem. Words—no, first, some idea—and then the idea was

taking shape in words and lines. I was trying to memorise the lines lest I should forget afterwards. Stanza by stanza it came. And when the poem was complete, at once I returned to my room at Golconde and wrote down the poem in my note-book and put the date underneath. It came directly in English (not in Bengali as usual). Here it is:

The Hour

The hour has struck—
 Yea, it is the Hour;
 The Creation's story turns a new leaf,
 And History awaits a newer Power.

Breaking through the barricades of Time,
 Conquering invincible Spaces,
 That which once was farthestmost
 Now within my heart arises and embraces.

Night's illusions fall shattering to the ground,
 Ego's resistance gives way;
 Nature is coaxed to surrender her rights,
 And my soul invokes the everlasting Day.

Yea, it is the Hour!
 And the Eternal Spring is no more in far-off lands—
 The Nightingale sings
 In my bosom's bower.

Amal Kiran's comment:

Both charming and effective.

Amal Kiran suggested two changes in the poem—in the first stanza, second line, he wrote 'Yes' in place of 'Yea' and in the last line of the last stanza, in place of 'bosom's bower' he wrote 'own heart's bower'. Here the original is kept. I believe the inspiration of this poem came from Sri Aurobindo himself.

That evening the Mother took her usual evening class in the Playground and during the meditation the Supramental Manifestation took place. What actually happened was disclosed to all the Ashramites by the Mother after four years—on 29.2.60, but on that very evening, nobody but she knew anything about it.

That evening, during meditation, I had felt a strong vibration of forces in my body from top to bottom. As that was quite usual to me, I did not pay special attention to it. But from the next morning I felt a change in the very atmosphere—as if the very texture of the atmosphere had changed. I was attending

daily the visitors' class. From the class-room often I looked outside through the window and it seemed to me that a mild golden hue was spread everywhere. This experience happened day after day. It gladdened my heart but I spoke about it to nobody. I thought that everybody was experiencing it but as the Mother had warned us against drum-beating, everybody was silent.

On 29.3.56 the Mother distributed in the morning from the Meditation Hall a message together with a picture painted by one of the Ashram artists. The message was taken from her book *Prayers and Meditations*, dated September 25, 1914. This was the message:

The Lord has willed and Thou dost execute:
A new light shall break upon the earth,
A new world shall be born,
And the things that were announced shall be fulfilled.

That afternoon, when I was working in the garden, Jatin-da came and said to me that the Mother had told a few people in the morning that the supramental had already descended on 29.2.56 and she had corrected the above message from future tense to present tense and she had also changed the person from 'Thou' to 'I'. I was delighted to hear this and knew that my experiences were not fake.

Jan/ Next day, 1.4.56, as I was going to the Mother for 'Prosperity' in the afternoon, I was feeling a great delight within my heart and from the glance of the Mother I understood that she had taken note of that delight in me.

Much later I came to know from the talks of the Mother that most of the ashramites were not aware of this manifestation. Now, those who are doubtful that anybody could have such experiences as I have had, I offer to them the following lines from Sri Aurobindo. Even I myself sometimes thought that my experiences were merely subjective or a hallucination of my eyes. Now, let us see what Sri Aurobindo has to tell us:

"... The spiritual experience does not even despise dreams and visions; it is known to it that many of these things are not dreams at all but experiences on an inner plane and if the experiences of the inner planes which lead to the opening of the inner self into the outer so as to influence and change it are not accepted, the experiences of the subtle consciousness and the trance consciousness, how is the waking consciousness to expand out of the narrow prison of the body and body-mind and the senses? For, to the physical mind untouched by the inner awakened consciousness, even the experience of the Cosmic Consciousness or the Eternal Self might very well seem merely subjective and unconvincing. It would think, 'Curious, no doubt, rather interesting, but very subjective, don't you think? Hallucinations, yes!' The first business of the spiritual seeker is to get away from the outward mind's outlook and to look at inward phenomena with an

inward mind to which they soon become powerful and stimulating realities. If one does that, then one begins to see that there is here a wide field of truth and knowledge, in which one can move from discovery to discovery to reach the supreme discovery of all. But the outer physical mind, if it has any ideas about the Divine and spirituality at all, has only hasty *apriori* ideas miles away from the solid ground of inner truth and experience.”

(*On Yoga*, Book 2, Tome 1, pp. 604-605)

After the supramental manifestation, which the Mother declared publicly on 6.6.56, in her evening class at the Playground somebody posed a question to the Mother:

To reach the Supermind, Sri Aurobindo says there are stages.. Is it necessary for everyone to go through all these stages?

The Mother: (*After a silence*) It is likely that a sequence of this kind always occurs. But the duration of the stages and their importance vary considerably according to individuals.... For some the passage may be rapid enough to be hardly perceptible, while for others it may take a very long time;... For some, it may be so rapid that it seems almost instantaneous... For others it may take years....

But then, suddenly—perhaps because one is sufficiently prepared, perhaps simply because the time has come, and it has been so decreed—suddenly, when such an experience occurs, its result in the part of the being where it takes place is a complete reversal of consciousness. It is a very clear, very concrete phenomenon....

(C.W.M., Vol. 8, pp. 171-172)

Then, again on 11 July '56 in her evening class in reply to a question on the supramental manifestation the Mother says:

The last question is from somebody who finds that I have made promises a little lightly and that, after all, I haven't kept my word!... Perhaps I expected more from humanity than it was capable of giving me...

I said more or less this, that those who are here in the Ashram will know the descent of the Supermind—they can't blame me for not having informed them when it came... I did not forbid anyone to participate in it! On the contrary, I believe I encouraged everybody to be open and to receive it, and try to profit by it.

And so I said. From that moment the transforming Grace will radiate in the most effective way. Well, I challenge anyone to tell me the opposite!

But here indeed it begins to be a little more... I added: And fortunately for

the aspirants this happy future—I don't think I wrote it in this way, but that doesn't matter—this happy future will materialise for them in spite of *all* the obstacles that the unregenerate human nature may put up against it. I continue to hope that it will be like this!

But now that person, who is perhaps a bit impatient, tells me this: “Why have the difficulties increased for quite a large number of sadhaks?” (*Mother puts the paper down forcefully on the table*) Who told you that it is not because you have become more conscious! that all your difficulties were there before, only you did not know it? .. If you see more clearly and see things which are not very pretty, it is not the fault of Supermind, it is your fault! It gives you a light, a mirror in which you can see yourself better than you did before, and you are a little troubled because it is not always very pretty? But what can I do?

And this person concludes: “Doesn't the supramental Force work here in spite of all the obstacles the unregenerate human nature puts up against it?” Truly, I hope it does! For otherwise, nothing could be done, the world would never be regenerated....

There is yet another reason. When the Force which is at work is stronger, more insistent, naturally what resists, resists as strongly. And if instead. . if instead of being hypnotised by your little difficulties, your little inconveniences, your small discomforts, your 'big' defects .. you tried to see the other side, how much more powerful the Force is, the Grace more active, the Help more tangible; in a word, if you were a little less egoistic and less concentrated on yourselves .. perhaps your view of the problems would change

(C.W.M , Vol. 8, pp 219-221)

By some mystery of Divine Will and Divine Grace, by some mystic and mysterious Divine Reason which the Supreme Lord alone knows, I was one of only a few persons to consciously participate in this Divine Event, to live this momentous Moment, to become a part of this extremely unusual Magic of magics, Miracle of miracles, to welcome and greet this Divine Dawn!

Since my childhood, my soul had been groping for this mystic Light; my psychic being, being goaded by some invisible Power, moved towards this divine Happening which happens only once in millenniums; my mind and life and body, constituting only an insignificant speck in the whole Scheme, also participated, although with hazy sight, blurred vision and tottering steps; even my unregenerate human nature, in spite of itself, was led towards this tryst with destiny.

Am I making too much noise and drum-beating? But that is the poetic nature! I hope the Divine Mother will forgive it as a peccadillo.

(*To be continued*)

ABANI SINHA

THE PURSUIT OF AGNI AND SOMA

“O splendid Agni, Thou who art so living within me, I call Thee, I invoke Thee that Thou mayst be more living still, that Thy brazier may become more immense, Thy flames higher and more powerful, that the entire being may now be only an ardent burning, a purifying pyre.”

Prayers and Meditations, September 30, 1914

SRI AUROBINDO in *The Secret of the Veda* has shown convincingly that behind the yajna conducted by the Vedic Aryans lay an elaborate spiritual discipline, psychological in nature, for the spiritual progress of the initiates. Of the initiates because, then as now, social development was not uniform and there were only a few who could understand and practise without harm this discipline. The language of the Vedas which contained its principles in terms of the spiritual experiences of the Rishis was, therefore, couched in double meaning, the hidden meaning becoming accessible only with the help of the adepts.

Thus yajna or sacrifice which apparently was a ritual of constructing an altar, kindling there a fire and offering oblations therein to Agni and other Nature Powers with the chanting of Vedic mantras was in its secret psychological sense a spiritual sadhana to be followed by the initiates. The progress of yajna, therefore, meant progress in the spiritual endeavour. “The whole process of the universe,” says Sri Aurobindo, “is in its very nature a sacrifice, voluntary or involuntary. Self-fulfilment by self-immolation, to grow by giving is the universal law”¹

The gods of the Vedic yajna represent in reality the divine Powers which under right conditions help the sadhaka to progress spiritually and they preside over certain psychological functions. In the Vedas they are named Agni, Soma, Indra, Varuna, etc., but to the initiates they were various aspects and powers of the supreme Divine, and not Nature Powers as may have thought the common man. The two deities who played the most important part in this yajna were Agni and Soma.

In the Vedas² Agni, time and again, is called jātaveda, knower of everything born, and Purohita, the chief priest of the sacrifice. To the Rishis he is hotā, the summoner of the gods, Kavi-Kratu, the Seer-Will endowed with true and richly varied inspirations and sādhu, achiever of perfection. Often he is called tanū-napāt, born of body and mind and sahasaḥ sūnu, son of Force. He is chosen as man’s messenger to the gods but occasionally referred to also as the messenger of the gods and he becomes atithi, guest of man. As Pāvaka, the purifier, he devours the impurities in man and grows and enriches man, his dwelling place. He is destroyer of the Rākṣasas. Although Agni takes birth in man and becomes his child and guest, his true home is Satyam, Ṛtam, Bṛhat, the Supreme Truth and the vast infinite Consciousness. He is the guardian of Ṛtam, the truth in man and

defends it from the powers of darkness. Agni when kindled has to be fostered like a child till he grows and then he in return protects man like a father. He continues to help man during the night as well as day. Agni exists everywhere and in everything but in man he is Trita, the warrior of the triple world of mind and life-force and the physical. As for the Upanishads, Chhandogya tells the story of Satyakāma who received instructions from Agni, and Katha Upanishad advises the nursing of the three fires of Nachiketa by those desirous of knowing Brahman. Isha Upanishad ends its brief discourse with an invocation to Agni, "O Agni, knowing all things that are manifested, lead us by the good path to the felicity "

अग्ने नय सुपथा राये विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् ।

There are numerous instances in other Upanishads also praising and invoking Agni.

If Agni symbolises a divine Power presiding over a psychological function, what is that function, how does he fulfil it? From Sri Aurobindo we learn that Agni symbolises the aspiring will in man turned towards the Divine. One can readily agree, for the Will shares all the characteristics attributed to Agni in the Vedas and the Upanishads. "The leader of the journey, the captain of the march, the first and most ancient priest of our sacrifice is the Will. This Will is not the wish of the heart or the demand or preference of the mind..."³ This Will works behind the veil in the night of man's ignorance preparing and waiting for the propitious hour to make its appearance. At first it is a flame, flickering and smoke-obscured due to the desires that surround it. A delegate of the divine Will, this divine guest in man has to be nursed and fostered like a child till it grows strong enough to take care of its human parent. Not only in man but in the whole universe this Will, this Agni is at work. "For he is the divine Will which in all things is always present, is always destroying and constructing, always building and perfecting, supporting always the complex progression of the universe"⁴ Born of Śraddhā, Faith, this Will instinctively knows the Truth it aspires for. It helps to rid man's consciousness of the impurities born of desire and ego. When kindled, this Will, like the summoner Agni, calls down the divine Powers and puts man into contact with the higher consciousness. As it grows strong it increasingly overcomes all obstacles and repels the adverse forces. Becoming constant and unwavering it helps man during the happy and difficult moments of his upward march. But it has to be kindled on all the three planes of man's consciousness—physical, vital and mental—where it purifies, perfects and offers the parts and activities of human nature to the divine Powers and labours to bring about collaboration between man and God.

Agni by his force can overcome many obstacles but he has to contend with and labour upon the rebellious human material when in our ignorance we resist

the heavenward impulse. The struggle that ensues is to a great extent minimised if Agni is helped by Soma.

The common man is accustomed to think of Soma only as the sweet intoxicating juice of a certain plant (now unknown) drunk by the Rishis in ancient times. The Rishis called him King Soma and considered him a god. In the yajña the soma drink served to attract other gods like Indra, Varuna, Mitra, etc., with Agni as the intermediary. The whole ninth mandala of the Rg-Veda is devoted to Pavamana Soma showing the importance the Rishis attached to Soma. Sri Aurobindo calls Soma the lord of Delight and Immortality. Let us see what attributes the Vedic Rishis conferred on him. He is like Agni, tanūnapāt, a child born of man's body. The daughter of the sun-god sūryā (also called Śraddhā in Śatapatha Brahmana) helps in his birth and cleansing. When born, he flows, rushes across to the gods or builds a bridge of bliss to heaven; helps in the advent of the gods and rapture मदाय देववीतये. He is वनस्पति the lord of Delight. He is implored to flow in rapturous and sweet streams पवस्य मदिष्टया धारया; मध्वः धारया. He is called सहस्रः सनुः son of Force, दिवः शिशुः child of heaven and कवेः अपत्यम् a child of the Seer. Although a god of sweetness he is also a mighty warrior with sharp terrible weapons ते भीमानि आयुधा तिग्मानि and is वृत्रहन्तमः among the greatest slayers of Vritra (who clouds man's consciousness). Needless to say that he drives away those who oppose and burns the Rākṣasas, अपस्त्रियः जहि रक्षांसि. He is golden, हिरण्यय, tawny, हरि, ruddy, rosy, अरुवः. He illumines his parents, brings them wisdom and riches पवस्य रयिम् (riches) गोमन्तम् (light) अश्विनम् (power). He comes with rain and lightning. The goddesses Sarasvatī (Inspiration), Iḷa (Revelation), Bhārati Mahī (Vastness) come to him. He is Pavamana Soma, and Pavamana, Vishnu Purana informs us, is a son of Agni born of his wife Swāhā (word of offering to the gods). He is there deep in the cavern (of the heart) गुहाहितम्. Thus we are led to the conclusion that Soma too is Agni from the many characteristics they share and yet he seems to be an Agni with a difference. अतप्ततनुर न तद् आमो अश्रुते, he whose body is not heated and purified by Agni does not enjoy that (Soma). So Agni, it seems, has to prepare the ground for the advent of Soma.⁵

Looking at this testimony of the Rg-Veda we can see to what extent Soma bears resemblance to what Sri Aurobindo calls the psychic being or the psychic fire in the cavern of the heart. Agni the aspiring will helps in his birth, faith nurtures him. He does not make his appearance till the mind and the vital being at least are prepared by the aspiring will and faith. His presence can be described as sweetness and delight. The Mother in one of her talks⁶ has said that even the gods of the Overmind are eager to have experience of the psychic, which is what makes man an exceptional being. The psychic can open doors more easily to the higher spiritual planes of consciousness, bringing down spiritual Peace and Ananda and illuminating intuitions and inspirations of Knowledge. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "... the psychic is in direct touch with the divine Truth",⁷ "Aspiration, constant and sincere, and the will to turn to the Divine alone are

the best means to bring forward the psychic ”⁸ “. . . the psychic joining [higher consciousness] if effectual is much more powerful for the change of the whole being.”⁹ And about the sadhaks’ experiences of the psychic he says, “... ‘A feeling of velvety softness within ... ’ is a psychic experience and can be nothing else.”¹⁰ “... psychic plasticity which makes surrender possible along with a free openness to the Divine working from above.”¹¹

The Katha Upanishad is probably referring to the psychic fire, Soma, when it declares,

अंगुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषो ज्योतिरिव अधुमकः ।

the Purusha that is within is no larger than the finger of a man: He is like a blazing fire that is without smoke (2.1.12), and adds, Him one must separate with patience as one separates from a blade of grass its main fibre (2.3.17).

If the object of yoga is not merely the soul’s union with the transcendent Divine but the integral transformation of human nature then the power of Agni, the will, is not sufficient to accomplish it. For, the mental, vital and physical consciousness of man surrenders to the Divine but with reservation. Soma, the psychic fire helps Agni in this difficult task. Its intoxicating sweet influence is more acceptable to these human parts. Habituated in the evolutionary struggle to possess and grow, the mind, the vital being and the physical consciousness try to possess the psychic also; but the divine warrior insidiously overwhelms them by his sweet but nevertheless fiery and a sort of anaesthetic power, that melts the opposition. Though these parts may struggle yet they submit under the psychic’s beatific influence and as the surrender progresses, learn that they lose only their ignorance and incapacity and gain far more instead—the Immortal’s Ananda in joyous collaboration.

If Agni and Soma, the two who are one, can be described as “fire-sweet, damask force of Infinity,” “image of Immortality” and “guest of the marvellous hour,” and surely they deserve to be so described, we may remember that Agni is the founder of the seven ecstasies on different planes of our nature¹² and that the most marvellous, the most enchanting hymn to the mystic and psychic Fire is Sri Aurobindo’s “Rose of God”—

Rose of God, vermilion stain on the sapphires of heaven,
Rose of Bliss, fire-sweet, seven-tinged with the ecstasies seven!
Leap up in our heart of humanhood, O miracle, O flame,
Passion-flower of the Nameless, bud of the mystical Name.

Rose of God, great wisdom-bloom on the summits of being,
Rose of Light, immaculate core of the ultimate seeing!
Live in the mind of our earthhood; O golden Mystery, flower,
Sun on the head of the Timeless, guest of the marvellous Hour

Rose of God, damask force of Infinity, red icon of might,
 Rose of Power with thy diamond halo piercing the night!
 Ablaze in the will of the mortal, design the wonder of thy plan,
 Image of Immortality, outbreak of the Godhead in man.

Rose of God, smitten purple with the incarnate divine Desire,
 Rose of Life, crowded with petals, colour's lyre!
 Transform the body of the mortal like a sweet and magical rhyme;
 Bridge our earthhood and heavenhood, make deathless the children of Time.

Rose of God, like a blush of rapture on Eternity's face,
 Rose of Love, ruby depth of all being, fire-passion of Grace!
 Arise from the heart of the yearning that sobs in Nature's abyss:
 Make earth the home of the Wonderful and life beatitude's kiss.

O Agni and Soma, who from behind the veil or with the conscious
 collaboration of man, help man to grow divine and fulfil God's purpose in his
 creation, Thee we approach with infinite gratitude and surrender.

V. JAYBEE

References

- 1 *The Secret of the Veda*, Cent Ed , Vol 10, p 266
- 2 Rg-Veda I 1 1-5, 8, 9, 13 1-2, 66 1, 77 2-3 II 2 1-8 III 6 6, 11 4, 21 1 IV 1 20, 4-5 V 1 1-2-2-7, 9,
 4 80, 5 8, 9 5 VI 2 7 VIII 23 25, 71 11 X 6-5, 51 1, 110 2, 115 4 and *Sri Aurobindo's Vedic Glossary—*
 A B Purani
- 3 *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Cent Ed , Vol 20, p 275
- 4 *The Secret of the Veda*, Cent Ed , Vol 10, p 267
- 5 Rg-Veda IX 1 1, 3, 6, 2 3-9, 3 7, 5 2-10, 6 7, 9 3, 10 8-9, 41 2-3, 61 30, 63 28, 66 20, 83 1
- 6 *The Mother's Collected Works—Questions & Answers*, Vol 6, 9 June 1954
- 7 *Letters on Yoga*, Cent Ed , Vol 24, p 1095
- 8 *Ibid* , p 1100
- 9 *Ibid* , p 1110
- 10 *Ibid* , p 1113
- 11 *Ibid* , p 1114
- 12 *The Secret of the Veda*, Cent Ed , Vol 10, p 365

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY OF SURMOUNTING THE ORDINARY MENTAL ACTIVITY?

A SPEECH BY PARU PATIL

[Paru Patil, who was one of the Trustees of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram from 1986, and the Registrar of the Centre of Education from 1976, passed away after a brief illness on 26 February 1996 at the age of sixty-three.]

When the New Age Association was started in July 1964, she became its member and at its First Seminar, held on 9 August 1964, she delivered a speech. The subject for this seminar, given by the Mother herself, was. "What is the Best Way of Surmounting the Ordinary Mental Activity?"

Her speech was published in the volume, The New Age, brought out by the Centre of Education in 1977. It is being reprinted here as it reveals her deep insight into this subject which is of great practical value to all spiritual seekers.]

MAN has often been compared to a miniature world. If he is a world, his mind, we may say, is its most cosmopolitan province. For ordinarily at its frontiers there are no posts or sentries, no checks or controls of any kind. All thoughts or rather, all formations assuming the garb of thoughts get a free entry. The natural outcome of such an influx is that innumerable formations of every name and description, originating from every conceivable nook and corner of our being, collect and jampack the highways and even the bypaths of this huge metropolis. So thick is the cluster and so loud the confusion of the disorderly multitudes that it has all the appearance of a complete anarchy. But strictly speaking it is not an anarchy, for the province suffers not from lack of government but from misgovernment. The vital, a foreigner to this region, has crept in stealthily along with its army of desires, preferences, prejudices and the rest and has ousted the true ruler and seized the reins of government in its hands. But blind, ignorant, restless, tempest-tossed as it is, it plays havoc with its new powers. For as soon as a thought enters from outside, it casts upon it its magic spell and starts off a hideous metamorphosis at the end of which the thought completely loses its identity and merges into the jarring mass bringing into it one more note of disharmony. Thus thought after thought gets coloured and deformed and day by day, hour by hour, the confusion grows. And yet we in our ignorance continue to identify ourselves with this nondescript mixture. We believe *this* to be our mind and submit ourselves to its mercy.

Now, if we want to put an end to this state of affairs, if we want to master the movements and activities of the mind instead of being carried off by them,

the first step, the most difficult one, is to dissociate ourselves from this mental whirlpool and with the help of deep concentration get in touch with our true mental being, the mental Purusha, and hand over to him the reins of government.

Once he emerges from behind the chaos, calm, detached and ever-conscious, he stands back for a while and quietly surveys his domain. When he has seen all with his dispassionate eyes, he starts reshuffling and reorganising his province. He summons all thoughts before him and reviews carefully each, dismissing many, warning a few and disciplining the rest. The review over, we find on one side rows of well-disciplined thoughts holding their due ranks in the mental hierarchy and on the other a seething, pulsating chaos ready to be cast away.

After this process of purification and harmonisation, the mental Purusha turns his attention to the gate of entry. He brooks no miscreants and therefore puts a severe check on the traffic of new thoughts and thereby controls all fresh admissions.

With this measure the situation is brought fairly under control. But we cannot afford to overlook in our hasty enthusiasm a twofold danger. On the one side the vacuum and on the other the pressing multitude.

A vacuum has been created by the rejection of all useless and disturbing elements which had once formed the bulk of the entire mind's content. And as nature abhors a vacuum it may be wise to consciously intensify the various activities of the mind. The sense-mind, the physical mind, the emotional mind, the thought-mind could all be given the nourishment best suited to their respective natures. This measure will diminish considerably the danger of the rejected elements rushing back to their old, accustomed places.

But what must we do with these elements? Reject them and sit quiet? No. For the ceaseless vigil of the mental Purusha and even the creation of strong ramparts may prove insufficient to ward off the persistent attacks of the nether forces. The enemies have been so far merely held at bay but nothing has been done to quieten them, to win them over. So the fourth step is to extend the influence of the mental Purusha to the Prakriti parts also and convert them and discipline them, as far as that is possible, with his light and wisdom.

With this the conquest and the administration of the mental province is complete. The movements and activities of our minds are now brought fully under control and can now help us to live a fuller, a more meaningful life. But in our triumph we must not forget that we have laid our entire trust on the mental Purusha alone. But he too, if he must serve happily and for long, should not cease to grow in light and wisdom. He too must, in his turn, get in touch with a higher and surer light, a greater force, an inexhaustible energy that can aid and support him always and always. Or else he may doze off one fine Sunday morning and the whole cycle will have to begin all over again.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo, the Smiling Master, by *Jugal Kishore Mukherjee*. Published in 1995 by Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, 441 pages, price: Rs. 150.

It was Nirodbaran who introduced the world to the multifaceted personality of Sri Aurobindo, in particular his humour and sense of humour, through publication of his wonderful correspondence with his Master. Now here we have Jugal Kishore Mukherjee presenting a scholarly work on Sri Aurobindo's humour with the subtitle "An analysis and an anthology". This is a book of research studying the canons and principles and art of humour with examples from literature followed by appropriate excerpts from Sri Aurobindo.

The book has 17 chapters. The first chapter introduces Sri Aurobindo as a person distant and austere but at the same time possessing a wonderful sense of humour. The second chapter, aptly titled "Humour as an art" gives a scholastic, though not too dry a lesson on what constitutes humour. The third chapter pays tribute to the few Sadhaks, good recipients and appreciative audience, who provoked their Guru to at last give free rein to his sense of humour to chide and play with them, gently, ironically at times and quite often tempering the blows in order to build them up in the process towards what he desired them to become. These Sadhaks, as many of you readers would have guessed, were Nirodbaran, Amal Kiran and Dilip Kumar Roy.

The fourth chapter is an analysis of Sri Aurobindo's humour categorizing it into 31 categories (Wow! I did not know there could be so many, thought they might be four, rhyming gleefully with the four seasons!) from humorous rhyming to puns with a few appropriate examples.

From the fifth chapter onwards we have examples galore of the Master's humour on matters medical, logical, literary, etc covering well the entire treasure, as available in his writings, of his use of humour. Finally Jugal Kishore in the last chapter, "The Smiling Master", deals with his two misgivings, one that some readers might feel that Sri Aurobindo was too humorous and the other that the Master was "basically a humorous writer".

I am not researching but only reviewing this book and hence might be excused for not finding things which might be hiding somewhere in the 441 pages. It would have been fun if I could have referred to an Index to seek the difference between, say, irony and sarcasm, and find an example or two of malicious humour. Of course, not in correspondence but in some plays, Sri Aurobindo may have used malicious humour. Not having an Index in a research work is however not uncommon and anyway to make an Index is a very laborious task even though it increases the value of a reference work.

Isn't there a difference between humour and sense of humour? Sense of

humour, I thought, was the ability to freely and easily laugh at oneself, to bear criticism, however heavy, as if it were a shower of the Service-tree flowers, an essential quality of the Divine without which there would have been no Compassion and no ever-present Grace. I remember Sri Aurobindo having said on one occasion that he would not have believed in a God if He did not have a sense of humour. I would have liked a little chapter on this aspect of Sri Aurobindo's "sense of humour" and how essential it is in Sadhana.

Like most ordinary readers of *Mother India*, I am no scholar; things like philosophy and prosody and theories of art are hardly my favourite pastime, and humour for me is a wonderful instrument to lighten the serious, of enlivening a chore, and reducing the weight of life's load. Humour for me is much more than salt or spice of life, rather it is an essential elixir without which life and Sadhana would be too dry for sustenance. I would have liked this view confirmed in this treatise. However, I am happy that I could go through this book, skipping here and there, and found the experience enjoyable and rewarding, no doubt because of the wonderful insight I could get into the use of humour by Sri Aurobindo with the obvious purpose of guiding his at times incorrigible disciples to the golden path of progress. As a side benefit I did learn about the various categories of humour.

To sum up, this is an uncommon scholastic research work that entertains, enlivens, without being too dry, and is a good anthology of Sri Aurobindo's humour that is a light and delight. Definitely a volume worth owning.

DINKAR D. PALANDE

A NOTE OF APPRECIATION

Dear JKM,

Thanks for your present of the *Smiling Master*. I hurriedly turned the pages yesterday and found the work done with your usual thoroughness. Not only scholarship but there is a deeper perception, and understanding, which is always admirable. Not that things herein are throughout new to us, but seeing them together in another perspective is a pleasure indeed. Of course, Sri Aurobindo was not Shankara, or Plato who had never smiled in his entire 82-year life, but took the rasa of life spiritedly because it was never an illusion for him. His spirit was light, and not light, with the gleaming thickness of honey—he drank the *madhu* in all its fiery splendour and gave a taste of it to us also. Even in his lighter moments never does the light err in him. We get a glimpse of another dimension of Sri Aurobindo's manifold Infinity. Sometimes Infinity is described as *Adbhuta*—that assuredly is ever our Smiling Master, beyond *ars metrica* or Cartesian description, the sheer Delight of Existence.

P.S. We must be thankful to you for giving us Sri Aurobindo's unpublished letter addressed to Sarat Guha who was misguided by Bejoy Nag, the fallacy of whose arguments was exposed by the Master (pp. 154-157, from the unpublished documents available with the author).

R. Y. DESHPANDE

Sudden Tales the Folks Told, by P. Raja. Pub. B. R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1995; pages 120, rupees 80.

Folklore is as old as humanity. Folklore is any of the beliefs, customs and traditions that people pass on from generation to generation. Much folklore consists of folktales. But folklore also includes puzzles, nursery rhymes, superstitions, etc. As soon as people develop a writing system, they begin to record folktales. However, folklore does not have to be written down.

Folktales can be short and simple or long and complicated. It is extremely difficult to make up folklore. The songs, stories, and other material that became folklore were, of course, thought up by various people. But those individuals had the rare ability to create a subject and a style that appealed to others over the years. Folklore survives only if it retains that appeal. Here is a collection of folktales by Dr. P. Raja who has successfully tried to retain that perennial appeal in his tales.

The Tamil language has its own rich folklore. And its folklore mostly lives happily among the aged people, especially in villages. In the present rat-race life, readers have turned to the genre of short-short story, now popularly known as "sudden" or "microwave" tales. The aged villagers are replete even with such "sudden" tales which spontaneously find expression in their day-to-day chores. When the aged story-tellers happen to step away from our world, their "sudden" tales too will vanish along with them. Hence, the writer Dr. P. Raja has undertaken a serious mission of saving the traditional words for posterity. "I'll not willingly let them die," he avers. He has already brought out a collection of folktales reflecting the culture of Pondicherry under the title, *Folk Tales of Pondicherry*. To fall in line with the current trend, now he has presented before us a collection of 52 "sudden" folktales. One can find several versions of each of such folktales. But what is unique in the writings of Dr. P. Raja is his way of presenting the narration pepped with humour and irony. Many have described his prose style as a racy one.

This collection presents a variety of folklore themes. The characters in the tales include cunning and arrogant mothers-in-law, foolish husbands, clever wives, Tenaliraman-type wits, malcontents, maggots, truth-finders, path-finders, and many more as usual. The story of a stupid guru and his foolish disciples is a

very common theme in folk fiction. The opening tale 'Let's Mind Our Business' represents this category. The story of an old man on his deathbed and his quarrelling sons is a cliché but the very same theme is clothed with novelty in the tale 'United We Stand' which tells about an imaginary fight among the five fingers of the hand for supremacy.

It is thoughts that kill us and make us happy or unhappy. The tale of 'One Coin... But Two Sides' nicely illustrates this aspect of human life. When a king wants to know who is grateful, the ministers begin their intensive search for the same. Ironically it is implied that the people who are close to us and whom we trust are usually not grateful. The tale 'Fate is Man-Made' ends with the conclusion that it is only determination that decides our fate. Death is essential and inescapable. Being ignorant of this, a king does not want to hear that his only daughter is 'dead'. The physicians cleverly tell him that she only stopped breathing and save themselves from death because of their failure to save her.

'Teeth', the symbol of cruelty, disappear without any trace. The 'tongue', if properly controlled, is the symbol of kindness and it lives longer and dies with us. 'The Sage's Choice' says that the life of anything that is hard is shorter than that of the soft ones. Do you know the shortest history of the world? Here it is: Men were born; they lived, then they died.

One popular kind of folktale has a trickster as the hero. Each culture has its own trickster figure. Most tricksters are animals who act like human beings. In this collection fishes are such characters in the tale 'The Big and the Bigger'. Similarly lions, dogs, and foxes share human attributes in 'Are You My Equal?' The tales like 'Pestle Pooja', 'Thief in the Attic' and 'The Miserly Miser' are sure to provoke uproarious laughter.

All the tales delight as well as instruct us. Though some of the themes are very familiar, they get a fresh treatment in the hands of the writer. The collection never bores the reader and each story is packed with humour, fun, wit, and wisdom. The ever-fresh tales appear fresher here. As Bertrand Russell has pointed out, we cannot be content merely to be alive rather than dead. We should wish to live happily, vigorously and creatively. And the function of the creative writer is to provide a part of the necessary conditions. Dr. P. Raja has been consistently doing this.

D. GNANASEKARAN

A MESSAGE TO SANTA CLAUS

NOT very long ago, a very lucky girl and her parents used to have their lunch with the Mother in her room.

It was a few days before Christmas. They were having their usual lunch. Someone asked, "Mother, is there a real father Christmas?"

"Somewhere, some time, yes, he exists. Whatever we imagine or believe in is always a concrete truth. It exists, that is why we know about it."

"But this picture of his coming and giving gifts? Does he really bring them?"

The Mother smiled very sweetly and looking at the little girl, said, "If we call him with real yearning in our hearts, he will come."

"Will he really?" With wide-open eyes the child asked.

"Yes, let us write him an invitation," the Mother said in all earnest.

A beautiful sheet of paper was chosen. The Mother wrote an invitation to Father Christmas, to dear Santa Claus, in red ink. She invited him to a midnight party on the night of 24th December—Christmas eve.

Then she folded the invitation and tore it secretly into small pieces.

We can imagine what an invitation it must have been. The Mother sending an invitation to Father Christmas.

"How will we send up the invitation?" was the next question.

The Mother said, "Let us see."

On her way to the tennis ground in the evening, She went to the Harpagon Workshop with the girl. The girl's parents and some others were also present.

The furnace was cleaned and kept ready. But there was no fire in it.

The Mother posted the invitation to Santa Claus by throwing the pieces of the torn invitation into the furnace. A strong gust of wind from the bellows took the small bits of paper up, up, up, into the vast blue sky. Those tiny pieces of invitation looked so pretty, floating higher and higher. A rainbow must have come to receive the invitation—so unique.

"Now he has received our message," the Mother said.

And a lovely party was arranged on 24th December at midnight.

It was a very special party.

Tiny glasses were filled with green, red, pink, yellow and orange juices. Small cherry cakes were prepared and placed on petite plates. Candles were lighted.

And they sat around the festive table and invoked Santa Claus to come and share their feast.

SUNANDA

A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS

84. GOD OR GO-BETWEEN?

“How dare he? Is he so foolishly bold? No devotee of Lord Siva in the whole universe would ever have the nerve to send Him as his go-between. But this fool of a fellow, Sundarar, has done that,” yelled Kalik Kamar, a devotee of Lord Siva.

Kalik Kamar’s wife silently listened to the ravings of her husband.

“Haven’t you heard of him? A fellow named Sundarar who composes and sings hymns. He married a girl named Sangili, while his first wife Paravai was hale and hearty Paravai became angry with him for being unfaithful to her and so she refused to admit him in her palace. This idiot, Sundarar, requested the Lord to act as his go-between to bring peace between him and his estranged wife. And do you know the funniest part of the story? Lord Siva obliged. By nightfall he went on foot to meet Paravai to appease her and settle the quarrel. How can a devotee ever think of reducing the Lord to such a mean rank of a go-between?”

Kalik Kamar’s wife listened, smiling all the while.

“If I happen to see Sundarar again, then my hands rather than my tongue will give him his deserts. It’s better that I don’t see him at all.”

“Cool down, dear! Cool down. It’s none of our business. And Lord Siva does what he thinks right.” Kalik Kamar’s wife pacified her husband.

Lord Siva, the unseen guest and silent listener to every conversation in the Universe, thought of a plan to quell Kalik Kamar’s anger against Sundarar and strengthen their friendship.

When the Lord put His plan into operation Kalik Kamar held his stomach with his hands, rolled on the floor and kicked the air, for he experienced a darting pain in the depth of his stomach.

Physicians were called in. Every dose of herbal medicine they administered only added to his suffering.

When the pain became unbearable, Kalik Kamar sought the help of the Divine by meditating upon Him.

Lord Siva appeared before him and said: “Only Sundarar can cure you. Be prepared to receive him.”

“I would rather prefer to die than to get cured at the hands of Sundarar, the one I hate beyond words,” Kalik Kamar burst out.

But the Lord was not there to hear him. He had other things to do. He appeared in the dream of Sundarar and commanded him to rush to Thiru Perumangalam, the most beautiful city in the Chola empire, and cure Kalik Kamar of his disease.

Sundarar awoke and began his journey

The news of his arrival at Thiru Perumangalam reached Kalik Kamar. He

gripped his teeth and reached for his dagger. "It is a sin to see Sundarar who made Lord Siva his go-between. And let this painful disease, instead of getting cured by a womaniser, die with me," so saying he jabbed the weapon into his stomach with great force and ripped open his belly.

Kalik Kamar fell down dead and thereby created a furore in the family.

His wife who had great respect for Sundarar requested everyone in the family not to mourn for the dead till Sundarar left Thiru Perumangalam.

Sundarar entered Kalik Kamar's house. The tumultuous welcome home he received there was token enough of his popularity. Kalik Kamar's wife gave him a warm welcoming smile.

"How is my friend, Kalik Kamar?" said Sundarar "Lord Siva has commanded me to cure him of his ailment."

"He is completely cured. He is sleeping. It's better that we don't disturb him," someone said.

"But something in me tells me that I am late. Please let me see my friend," said Sundarar in a pleading tone.

Finding no way out, Kalik Kamar's wife took Sundarar to the room where her husband had been laid to rest.

Sundarar saw Kalik Kamar's body lying in a pool of blood. His intestines were hanging out. Beside him was the blood-stained dagger that had cured him of the long disease called life.

Sundarar stooped silently and picked up the dagger.

"What's this life worth when I am unable to save the life of a friend and fellow devotee? What's the use of living when I am unable to carry out the commandment of Lord Siva?... This little weapon that has already taken away my friend's life is good enough to take away mine too," said Sundarar raising the dagger to his own chest.

To everyone's surprise the dead Kalik Kamar sprang to life and stopped the weapon from plunging into Sundarar's chest by holding Sundarar's raised hand.

At the mere touch of Sundarar's hand Kalik Kamar's ripped-open belly began to heal itself. For a time he was unable to believe his eyes. He then understood the divine powers of Sundarar, to whom Lord Siva Himself had played a go-between. He fell at Sundarar's feet and requested him to pardon him.

"It's all the play of the Lord," said Sundarar, hugging Kalik Kamar.

The invisible Lord smiled when His two ardent devotees became friends again.

85. THE DIVINE MAGIC

Vathavuran was surprised to see a royal palanquin alight in front of his house. Curiosity drove him to his main door to find out what was happening.

“That’s him. He is Vathavuran,” said a neighbour to the courtier who stood beside the palanquin.

The courtier bowed and said, “His majesty King Arimartana Pandian has sent us to fetch you to his palace. He had heard of your great learning and accomplishments. The palanquin is ready.”

Vathavuran reached Madurai. A grand welcome was given to him. At a function held in the palace on the same day, King Arimartana Pandian honoured him with the title “Thennavan Brahmarayan” meaning “Master of wisdom in the South”.

The gathering cheered and hailed Vathavuran as scholar, pundit and bringer of light to the ignorant masses.

It took a few minutes for the shouts of joy to subside. The king then said: “I appoint Vathavuran the prime minister of Madurai.”

The gathering approved the king’s announcement by throwing their turbans and sashes in the air. The surprised Vathavuran thanked the king and the gathering profusely for the high honour they had showered on him.

To Vathavuran, a devotee of Lord Siva, all the pomp and glory of his vast learning, and the abundant power he wielded as the prime minister of a country, its immense resources of wealth, the friendship of courtiers, scholars and warriors his political power had brought him, were of ephemeral value. He was searching within and without for something different—the supreme objective of man’s life on earth

As he was continuing his search, the king one day entrusted Vathavuran with the work of purchasing horses for his cavalry wing. Handing a huge number of gold coins over to his prime minister, the king said: “I have heard of a merchant from Arabia who has reached our port city with horses of high breed. And you know my cavalry arm has a number of age-withered horses. They have to be replaced by young and swift-footed ones. Make your selection. I have a lot of confidence in you as a connoisseur of horses.”

The royal cavalcade headed by the youthful prime minister was drawing near the port city, when the chant of the sacred Saiva *Agamas*¹ rose from a neighbouring grove. Its solemn mysterious strains had the magnetic power to pull Vathavuran to the grove.

He saw a Saivite saint seated under a sprawling *kuruntha* tree. Surrounded by a host of disciples, the saint was chanting.

Spell-bound, Vathavuran listened to the chant. Rapt in wonder he approached the saint, who whispered into his ear ‘Om Nama Sivaya’.

The sacred name of Lord Siva, ‘Nama Sivaya’, connotes the love and essence of the Divine. Chanting the name which is without a synonym, an aspirant is supposed to realise the divine reality.

1 Divine system of doctrine, Scriptures

Vathavuran began to chant 'Om Nama Sivaya' and the chant proved to be a turning-point in his life.

The saint revealed his identity. He was Lord Siva Himself, and the host of disciples were only His attendants. Vathavuran became a convert to His Grace. And the Lord named him Manikkavasakar, meaning "Singer of gem-like songs".

Manikkavasakar, despising all earthly allurements, resigned himself to the will of Lord Siva, who is 'all-pervading love', 'the vast ambrosial Sea of Grace'. He decided to spend the rest of his life by remaining in the grove and singing hymns. At the instance of the Lord he began to construct a temple there, spending the king's money.

King Arimartana Pandian happened to hear of the transformation of his prime minister and of the unauthorised spending of his money. Hence he sent a note to Manikkavasakar commanding him to return immediately.

"What shall I do now? The temple is nearing completion. And I have no money to buy horses. Advise me, O Lord," prayed Manikkavasakar.

Lord Siva said: "Do not fear. I am always with you. Go to Madurai and meet your king." He then advised him what he should tell the king.

Back in the palace, Manikkavasakar had to face the wrath of the king.

"For dereliction of duty, you are in for punishment," bawled the king.

"I've only performed my duty. Why should I be punished, your majesty?"

"Then where are the horses?"

"I have already purchased several horses of high breed. I was waiting for the auspicious day, the first day in the month of *Avani*,² to bring them here. Meanwhile I had a call from you and that's why I am here."

The king showed signs of cooling down

"It's a blatant lie, your majesty!" a minister interposed. "All your money given to buy horses has gone into the making of a temple at Thiru Perunthural."

Many in the court agreed with the jealous minister's words and thereby infuriated the king all the more.

"Then throw him behind bars and torture him till he comes out with the truth," commanded the king.

In the prison Manikkavasakar was tormented in many cruel ways. But he repeatedly advised the tormentors not to strain themselves, for the horses would definitely come on the fixed day.

The horses did come, herded by Lord Siva Himself in the guise of a horse-dealer from an alien land "Your prime minister had paid me for all these horses. He wanted them to be delivered today. But where is he?" He said.

King Arimartana Pandian ran to the prison, freed Manikkavasakar and begged his pardon.

The king himself estimated the horses and found them several times more

2 The name of the fifth Tamil month, from mid-August to mid-September

than his money's worth. He was immensely pleased with the buy and praised Manikkavasakar sky-high.

But the king's joy didn't last long. And the trials of the poet were not over.

It was midnight. The people of Madurai woke up to the howlings of the jackals. They became jittery. They opened their windows. They saw packs and packs of jackals running here and there. No one knew for certain how they entered the city streets. But soon the mystery unravelled itself.

The horses delivered by the 'horse-dealer' in the morning were transformed into jackals, for the Lord converted the jackals of the forest into horses and drove them before the king.

This strange transformation highly enraged the king. He howled: "Arrest the deceitful prime minister and torture him in all possible ways. Show him no mercy till he gives back all that he has squandered from the royal coffers."

Manikkavasakar was destined to suffer. And suffering unleashed the hidden springs of poetry. Manikkavasakar's *Thiruvacakam* (*Sacred Song*) was born. Regarded as a handbook on mystical theology, the work is held in high veneration by the Tamils.

Unable to extract the truth from Manikkavasakar, the tormentors dragged him to the dry sandbed of River Vaikai and made him stand there for days at a stretch. It was midsummer and the hot sand made blisters on his soles and he wriggled like a worm.

Yelling in pain, he called Lord Siva for help.

"Go now, Ganges dear, and save my devotee from pain," the Lord commanded his lady-love hidden in his matted hair.

Ganges, the River, flowed and awoke River Vaikai slumbering under the sand-bed.

Water began to rise slowly from the riverbed and Manikkavasakar heaved a sigh of relief. The tormentors carried him back to the prison.

Soon River Vaikai was in spate and threatened to demolish its strongly constructed bank-walls.

The king realized what a great godman Manikkavasakar was, for River Vaikai always remained dead during summer, and a flood during that season was unheard of.

He released Manikkavasakar for his true devotion to the Lord and made him prime minister once again.

But power and glory of office never had any charm for Saint Manikkavasakar. His quest was quite different. He aspired to experience an inner joy by becoming one with the Lord.

(More legends on the way)

THE SPLENDID IMPERATIVE OF SATYAVAN'S DEATH

THE day on which Satyavan is to die has dawned. Savitri has completed the three-night vow, the difficult vow of standing on a given spot continuously for three days and three nights. On the fated day she gets ready with the sunrise and performs the morning rituals, *paurvāhnikī kṛiyā*, by kindling a bright fire and making sacrificial offerings to it. She then goes to several cottages and pays her respects to the elders, and to all the sages of that holy penance-grove. The Rishis there, grown rich in austerity, bless the young bride-and-tapasvini by wishing for her good auspicious things in a long life without widowhood. Savitri, adept as she was in the Yoga of Meditation, whom Vyasa calls *dhyānyogaparāyanā*, enters into it and affirms in her heart their words of benediction. She knows that the particular time and moment of Satyavan's death, as foretold by Narad, is arriving soon. Her husband is about to leave for the forest for his daily work; but the afflicted wife halts him and pleads that she would not be able to bear separation from him and that she would, on that day, accompany him wherever he would go. In the forest, at the midday hour, when he is busy with the work of chopping wood, Satyavan feels exhausted and succumbs to the pain rushing into his body, like hungry hounds of death eating into it. Presently Yama appears there and, seizing his soul, starts moving in the direction of the South, the Abode of the Departed. But Savitri follows him and with high mantric utterances, of Revelation charged with the effectuating Power of the Truth, wins from the God several boons, including lastly the soul of Satyavan for the fulfilment of her work on the earth.

The death of Satyavan is the central theme of the Savitri-tale around which the entire occult action revolves. If the location where the event takes place is in the emerald grove of Shalwa land, all the three streams of time imperceptibly converge there with their rush of strange divinity to realise that event. Something supramundane seems to get glowingly precipitated in its present occurrence here. Dimensions that are beginningless-endless and that stretch limitlessly in every direction, or gather from every direction, have conspired to bring about this exceptional death. "Satyavan must die"—they all proclaim triumphantly, as if as the reward of gaining Infinity in the scheme of this world, ushering it here in a new birth filled with splendours of the sun. If Life-chased-by-Death is to be terminated, then it is necessary that Death itself be terminated. That deathless life is the boon granted by the Divine Mother to Aswapati when he prayed to her to redeem the lot of this mortal creature. The supreme Goddess tells the Yogi:

A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour,
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;
Nature shall overleap her mortal state;
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will.¹

For the tremendous hour of Death to arrive Satyavan has to die in the lap of Savitri. That fated event shall be the occasion for the unchanging will's fateful action. The empty chasm left behind in the dissolution of Death will be overleapt by Nature to gain her immortal state. Such is the promise given to Aswapati and it is that promise which will be fulfilled by Savitri. The fulfilment is to take place in the death of her most beloved, even while greatness of the miraculous noon would stand chilled under the shadow of an awesome and overbearing Presence.

What is indicated only as a broad decision in this assurance of the supreme Goddess is made more definite in Narad's pronouncement. A defeatless force is released into the creation and now it has to discover a *modus operandi* to give to the boon an unimpaired shape of luminous Everlastingness. Narad, the singer of ecstasy's ways, lends himself to do it in the glory of Vishnu and in the "joy and passion of the mystic world". Aswapati's tapasya lifted the burden of the mortal's desire to the Transcendent and brought down in its gleaming fold this transforming power. The field that was prepared by his vast occult action has now become the playground for the Flame-Child—safe and sure in its supporting strength. Now the Eternal has stepped into the workings of Time, accepting all seasons and the cyclic moods for the great fulfilment. The marvellous Vision that would not remain too long on this "life's thin border" is now steadied here, that it could pour the divine afflatus in an unceasing stream. If the Yogi climbing from the earth has done what he had proposed to do, the Sage must presently step down from heaven and deliver the Word of Fate.

Savitri has met Satyavan in happy Nature's sylvan solitude and

Discharging the proud mission of her heart,
One carrying the sanction of the gods
To her love and its luminous eternity .²

she has come back to the Palace, betraying in her tread the dreaming sweetness of new-found love. But this sanction of the gods for love's eternity has to pass through the fire-ordeal. In the Palace Hall where the royal parents are in session with the god-sage, Savitri discloses her choice of Satyavan and her firm resolve in marrying him: "My father, I have chosen. This is done." That's it. But Narad has to strike an alarming note about this rare being, of such a divine make:

In one brief year when this bright hour flies back
And perches careless on a branch of Time,
This sovereign glory ends heaven lent to earth,
This splendour vanishes from the mortal's sky:
Heaven's greatness came, but was too great to stay.
Twelve swift-winged months are given to him and her;
This day returning Satyavan must die.³

There is nothing romantic or singsong in Narad's heart-rending utterance of doom, as we see in Romesh Chander Dutt's rendering of the original Vyasa tale:

Fatal fault or destined sorrow! for it is decreed on high,
On this day, a twelve-month later, this ill-fated prince will die!

Dignity, and with it the firmness that comes in a dispassionate expression, is very much absent in these verses. On the other hand, Vyasa himself is epically impersonal in putting the statement, he doesn't even seem to be touched by the grave calamity. After hearing an account of the good qualities of Satyavan, Aswapati asks Narad if there is any blemish in him before he can consider giving his daughter in marriage to him; he is told:

एक एवास्य दोषो हि गुणानाक्रम्य तिष्ठति ।
स च दोषः प्रयत्नेन न शक्यमतिवर्तितुम् ॥
एको दोषोऽस्ति नान्योऽस्य सोऽयप्रभृति सत्यवान् ।
संवासरेण क्षीणायुर्देहन्यासं करिष्यति ॥

Yes, there is but one and is such that, because of it, all the high merits and virtues stand helplessly still; try howsoever one may, it is not possible to erase that blemish. Satyavan will in one year from today abandon his body, his life here expended; this is the only blemish bearing on him and there is no other.

Of course, this does not detract Savitri and she is willing to accept in full the consequences that have been prophesied. In her reasoning, and more in her conviction, Narad sees a fine understanding and discernment that is in conformity with the dharma; he therefore recommends to Aswapati this unusual marriage and, wishing auspicious things of life, blesses them all:

अविघ्नमस्तु सावित्र्याः प्रदाने दुहितुस्तव ।
साधयिष्याम्यहं तावत् सर्वेषां मद्रमस्तु वः ॥

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

Though apparently sending opposite signals, we have in these two statements of Narad a benignly revealing message: he speaks of the inevitability of Satyavan's death and, at the same time, wishes bright prospects of life in it. It looks as though Satyavan has gathered in his body the entire past built by the inconscient travail which has now to be consumed and in which a bright heavenly Fire has to be kindled through the singular action of Savitri. Thus alone would this

functional death be fulfilling. Aswapati's tapasya, Savitri's taking birth, the discovery of her divine companion, and the prophecy of doom, all these events are moving with an epic rapidity towards their culmination in the sadhana of Savitri—carried out in the earth consciousness to conquer death—and, finally, in her triumphant siddhi.

That the incontinent past has put on this world the stamp of illusion is unmistakable, not only in its metaphysical sense but also in its occult-spiritual operation. There is considerable force in this argument making the phenomenal existence look mayic, with its abandonment as the only door of escape. Some appearance of reality no doubt is lent to what we are, but that is more to entangle us in it and perpetuate the dark ignominy of a transient and sorrowful life. If there is truth behind this phenomenal world, then that truth is illusion and all talk of divinity in matter is foundationless. People have found a way to heaven but not to the deep heart of the earth. Underneath it is buried the Karma of creation and the gods are helpless to wipe it off. The source of evil and falsehood and misery and suffering, indeed death itself, is present in it and the necessity of its dissolution cannot be wished away. One extreme movement would be to go to the country of supreme happiness, Sukhavati of the Buddhist, the Pure Land, and dwell in eternal beatitude; but that glory and excellence, that blessedness, is out of the question here on this planet. What one can fervently aspire for is to be reborn in that land and live in the company of the most virtuous beings. According to this prescription, all our effort here should therefore be to follow the path of renunciation and to make good the way to the other place. However, hardly can this pragmatism be satisfying to the innermost psyche of man, though there is no other solution in sight. How can our bodily existence be dismissed by simply saying that it is the product of the past, of former Karma? This cause-effect chain has to be destroyed. Satyavan in his spiritual experiences has already come to recognise the dichotomy, but is unable to resolve the issue. In fact he is stuck here in his progress. In his strange solicitous utterances to win Savitri he tells her:

I carved my vision out of wood and stone;
 I caught the echoes of a word supreme
 And metred the rhythm-beats of infinity
 And listened through music for the eternal Voice.
 I felt a covert touch, I heard a call,
 But could not clasp the body of my God
 Or hold between my hands the World-Mother's feet.
 In men I met strange portions of a Self
 That sought for fragments and in fragments lived:
 Each lived in himself and for himself alone
 And with the rest joined only fleeting ties;

Each passioned over his surface joy and grief,
 Nor saw the Eternal in his secret house
 I conversed with Nature, mused with changeless stars,
 God's watch-fires burning in the ignorant Night,
 And saw upon her mighty visage fall
 A ray prophetic of the Eternal's sun.
 I sat with the forest sages in their trance:
 There poured awaking streams of diamond light,
 I glimpsed the presence of the One in all.
 But still there lacked the last transcendent power
 And Matter still slept empty of its Lord.
 The spirit was saved, the body lost and mute
 Lived still with Death and ancient Ignorance;
 The Inconscient was its base, the Void its fate.
 But thou hast come and all will surely change:
 I shall feel the World-Mother in thy golden limbs
 And hear her wisdom in thy sacred voice.
 The child of the Void shall be reborn in God.
 My Matter shall evade the Inconscient's trance,
 My body like my spirit shall be free:
 It shall escape from Death and Ignorance.⁴

For this escape from Death and Ignorance it is necessary that Satyavan should die. "One who looks upon the world as a bubble or a mirage, Yama the King of Death cannot find him," says the Dhammapada. Satyavan did not look upon the world as a bubble or a mirage and for that reason Yama found him; but he found him in the presence of Savitri who was there to burst this bubble or dispel the mirage. The conviction was that she has come and "all will surely change". He had earlier missed the link connecting earth and heaven and to him the secret aim of the world was not known; in him the human sense of immortality was absent; this feeling of frustration has now disappeared and Savitri shall bring to him a completer fulfilment. The world is not a bubble and a mirage, but is charged with divine contents, actually, Death and Ignorance are the bubble and the mirage and Yama the King has to disappear in Savitri's Avataric work. Death is standing on the path of the divine Event and, if he refuses to vacate the place, he must be removed from it. For that Satyavan must first die. Narad is categorical that this must happen at the end of one year of the strange blessed marriage. The hour has come and keen are the sages and the gods to receive it.

Was Satyavan's death a part of the divine plan? Does its inevitability constitute an aspect of the transcendental wisdom? So it seems. There is a determinism of the highest kind fixed in it. While explaining Sri Aurobindo's aphorism about God's play in the world and His will in humanity, the Mother

tells us: "In the universe and more particularly upon earth everything is part of the divine plan executed by Nature and everything is necessary for its fulfilment. Personal will is one of Nature's means of action and indispensable for her working. So personal will is in a way part of God's will. However, to understand properly, we must first agree on the meaning that is given to the word 'will'. Will, as it is usually conceived, is the elaboration of a thought, to which is added a force, a power of fulfilment accompanied by an impulse to carry it out. That is the description of human will. Divine will is quite another thing. It is a vision united with a power of realisation. Divine will is omniscient and omnipotent, it is irresistible and immediate in its execution. Human will is uncertain, often wavering, always in conflict with opposing wills. It is effective only when for some reason or other it is in accord with the will of Nature—itsself a transcription of the divine will—or with the divine will itself, as a result of Grace or Yoga."⁵ In the case of Satyavan's death what is involved is directly the divine will itself. The boon received by Aswapati does not speak of it explicitly, mentioning and detailing space and time and name, but is specific enough to tell of "death's tremendous hour". It is therefore "irresistible and immediate in its execution". Savitri herself as a human instrument, to receive the divine will, has done intense Yoga and prepared to let the Grace work in her. The "must" of death and the occult readiness have now been assured. Yet the battle is not a fake battle, or a shadow battle, for it is the great Shadow himself the divine Might is going to meet; there is in it Death's creative element in full play. Savitri has to also invoke the Power of Protection in her most dire hour when she will stand on the verge of extinction or of winning everything for the beautiful soul of this earth:

In that tremendous silence lone and lost
Of a deciding hour in the world's fate,
In her soul's climbing beyond mortal time
When she stands sole with Death or sole with God
Apart upon a silent desperate brink,
Alone with her self and death and destiny
As on some verge between Time and Timelessness
When being must end or life rebuild its base,
Alone she must conquer or alone must fall.⁶

But ever "Heaven's tranquil shield guarded the missioned child". Human Savitri on the fated day worships Durga and proceeds with Satyavan to the forest to deal with death. What transpired between the Woman and the Goddess none knew:

The whole year in a swift and eddying race
Of memories swept through her and fled away

Into the irrecoverable past.
 Then silently she rose and, service done,
 Bowed down to the great goddess simply carved
 By Satyavan upon a forest stone.
 What prayer she breathed her soul and Durga knew.
 Perhaps she felt in the dim forest huge
 The infinite Mother watching over her child,
 Perhaps the shrouded Voice spoke some still word.⁷

Durga is the Protectress of the World and her guarding the missioned child is hence for the cause of the World. The grim battle is within a few hours from now and whatever is to be decided is going to be decided soon in it. But the Goddess of Victory is by her side. In the Battle of the Mahabharata, Arjuna was told by Sri Krishna to offer his prayers to Durga, asking her to give him strength to defeat the enemy in the cruel war about to begin. Bhishma the mighty patriarch has taken command on the opposite side and his fiery and invincible spirit inspires awe indeed even in the bravest. Accepting Sri Krishna's advice Arjuna gets down from the chariot and, folding his hands, invokes Durga in a Hymn of Praise. The Goddess of Victory appears on the battlefield and blesses the chosen hero to the effect that not very long hence would he accomplish the difficult task of vanquishing the formidable enemy. Arjuna is now ready but, at the most crucial moment, his Aryanhood sags and Sri Krishna has again to prop up the human instrument for the divine work.

Unlike the War of Kurukshetra, Savitri's battle is an inner battle and she has to face the Antagonist in her lonely strength. She has harboured in her spirit the might of the infinite Mother and, carrying a secret conviction of her success, on the fated day she accompanies Satyavan to the forest. But in the death of Satyavan she goes beyond the forest, far beyond this earthly world, to the end of this world, to see whence comes the end to it. Her being grows vast and takes spiritual control over what is going to ensue:

Then suddenly there came on her the change
 Which in tremendous moments of our lives
 Can overtake sometimes the human soul
 And hold it up towards its luminous source.
 The veil is torn, the thinker is no more:
 Only the spirit sees and all is known.
 Then a calm Power seated above our brows
 Is seen, unshaken by our thoughts and deeds,
 Its stillness bears the voices of the world:
 Immobile, it moves Nature, looks on life....
 The voice of life is tuned to infinite sounds,

The moments on great wings of lightning come
 And godlike thoughts surprise the mind of earth.
 Into the soul's splendour and intensity
 A crescent of miraculous birth is tossed,
 Whose horn of mystery floats in a bright void...
 Immortal yearnings without name leap down,
 Large quiverings of godhead seeking run
 And weave upon a puissant field of calm
 A high and lonely ecstasy of will.
 This in a moment's depths was born in her.⁸

Such was the crescent tossed into the splendour of Savitri's soul. Not Arjuna's sudden weakness, but a calm Power took her in its possession to meet the challenge. That Power embodied in it the aeonic will itself, to establish in the mortal world the sovereignty of the triple Glory. Then in her

A force descended trailing endless lights...
 It sank into her soul and she was changed....
 That mightiness assumed a symbol form;
 Her being's spaces quivered with its touch,
 It covered her as with immortal wings;
 On its lips the curve of the unuttered Truth,
 A halo of Wisdom's lightnings for its crown,
 It entered the mystic lotus in her head,
 A thousand-petalled home of power and light.
 Immortal leader of her mortality,
 Doer of her works and fountain of her words,
 Invulnerable by Time, omnipotent,
 It stood above her calm, immobile, mute.⁹

Durga, to whom Savitri had offered her prayers in the morning, has taken charge of the happenings in the Shalwa forest. In the quiet strength and in the serenity of her spiritual confidence, carrying in it a sense of purpose, the indomitable Woman arises to encounter Death. Though in front of her is walking the great visible Dread, Mahad Bhayam, she is without fear; her pace equals the God's in following him. Courageously she has entered, as Hamlet would say, "the undiscovered country from whose bourne/No traveller returns". She has stepped into the "perilous silences beyond". Death would admonish her:

Let not the dreadful goddess move thy soul
 To enlarge thy vehement trespass into worlds
 Where it shall perish like a helpless thought.¹⁰

But she would enlarge her trespass, she would stand up in her primal force, without answering him, disregarding his stern warning and yet sterner look. Savitri had argued extensively on fundamental issues and pleaded the imperative of Satyavan's soul to do God's work in the world. And, precisely for that very reason, the great Denier refused to give it back to her. These, however, were not mere wordy arguments of the metaphysical-dialectical kind, tossed only to win over the opponent in a debate. Great forces were released through these utterances, dark and luminous, stirring up the solemn abyss that lay so long in cosmic drowse, unmoved to rapturous life's secret urges. In the clash and clangour of these forces mighty actions were to be accomplished, either to destroy or recreate in their superhuman measure this gloom-stricken earth's destiny. Here now in the dire occult depth was heard, for the first time, the Hymn of Joy, loud and bold in its decisive strength. Never had this happened so far in the entire spiritual history of the creation. To walk through darkness and sing of sweetness and felicity is possible only when the song comes from the highest source of benign purity. Savitri's Hymn of Joy was born of love, love that is the "bright link twixt earth and heaven", possessing that benign purity. But, as far as Death was concerned, this love was the product of the flesh and her words just "large murmurs in a mystic dream" that can never see the light of day. What this harsh Immortal considers to be his Hymn of Joy is the death of the soul if, as "matter's gate to peace", it refuses the death of the body. Such were the edicts written on the rocky columns supporting Death's kingdom. These columns, when struck, always spoke in shrill awful voices drowning the music of the spheres. Savitri flung the Word, but it quivered and disappeared in the hollow of the Night. Nothing seemed to avail against adamant Death. Savitri is in a real deadlock and yet how can she give up her claim? The only way out for her, she realises, is to call back speech and enter into the deep meditation's cave, into her calm soul where the holy Yajna, the eternal Sacrifice to the Supreme, is ever proceeding; in it she invokes its power to act. Even then the Shadow-God is relentless, for him "no magic Truth can bring the dead to life" and the ordaining Law is greater than her will. A superior Will must step in.

Each time the denial climbs down a rung deeper into the terrible Void, Savitri rises to a yet higher Truth and asserts Its supremacy in it. A divine Flame is kindled that burns downward, setting afire in its march the darkness of the nether world. Lands and kingdoms that had never known Heaven-light awake to the approaching miracle that will transform them. Death yet resists. Finally, this quintessential Negation asks Savitri to reveal to him her divinity; only then would he give her back the soul of Satyavan. Not to mortality but to divinity alone would he hand it over—being its splendid custodian, such indeed seems to be his true concern. Has Savitri the Power to receive it? That is the crucial test and, unless Savitri passes it, she cannot with that divine soul hope to establish the life divine in the earthly life. The dire Force's demand is unequivocal:

O human claimant to immortality,
 Reveal thy power, lay bare thy spirit's force,
 Then will I give back to thee Satyavan.
 Or if the Mighty Mother is with thee,
 Show me her face that I may worship her;
 Let deathless eyes look into the eyes of Death,
 An imperishable Force touching brute things
 Transform earth's death into immortal life.
 Then can thy dead return to thee and live,
 The prostrate earth perhaps shall lift her gaze
 And feel near her the secret body of God
 And love and joy overtake fleeing Time.¹¹

Two alternatives seem to have been offered to Savitri by Death but, in either of them, to take an extreme view, he is safe—he is not really giving Satyavan back to her. If the claimant to immortality is human then the supposition is that, howsoever great he may be, he cannot house the spirit's force in him to win back the deceased. It would then be presumptuous on the part of Savitri to think so and she must return with her wish unfulfilled. She may possess knowledge, speak Truth, her voice may carry the sound of infinity, in her eyes may shine the light of things beyond, but what is necessary is the strength to conquer Time and Death That is beyond the reach of an ordinary mortal and Savitri has to prove that she is more than that. Alternatively, deathless eyes have to look into the eyes of Death and cast their gaze on brute things that earth's death be transformed into immortal life. Then can the dead return and hope to be close to the body of God. Death is cocksure that this won't happen.

But, in that tremendous hour, the two alternatives fuse into one; in it Savitri's claim is established and the Mighty Mother looks into the eyes of "victorious Death". The indwelling Deity, seated in the deep heart of Savitri, throws away the outer veil and at the same time the Power reigning from her being's summit descends from above. Centre after centre in her subtle body is invaded by that mightiness and, as the force of Kundalini rushes in a ceaseless flow, her whole being stands up in calm strength waiting for the supreme Word. The Power and the Presence have joined in one single act. Mahadevi and the Incarnation have become the blaze that can light up even the darkest shadow. Durga and Savitri are now in full readiness to deal with Death. "Eternity looked into the eyes of Death" and bade him.

Relieve the radiant god from thy black mask;
 Release the soul of the world called Satyavan
 Freed from thy clutch of pain and ignorance
 That he may stand master of life and fate,
 Man's representative in the house of God...¹²

Even then Death does not relinquish his hold and insists on his right to be and to rule. But

A pressure of intolerable force
Weighed on his unbowed head and stubborn breast...¹³

and he tried to flee away from that terrible assault. But finally he had to succumb and yield, get devoured by her blaze:

At last he knew defeat inevitable
And left crumbling the shape that he had worn,
Abandoning hope to make man's soul his prey
And force to be mortal the immortal spirit.
Afar he fled shunning her dreaded touch
And refuge took in the retreating Night...
The dire universal Shadow disappeared
Vanishing into the Void from which it came.¹⁴

The Presence within Savitri and the Power that came from above have together won the victory in the earth's subtle-physical. Yes, Satyavan must die that Death be dead.

R. Y. DESHPANDE

References

- 1 Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p 346
- 2 *Ibid* , p 418
- 3 *Ibid* , p 431
- 4 *Ibid* , pp 405-406
- 5 The Mother, *Collected Works*, Vol 10, p 54
- 6 Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p 461
- 7 *Ibid* , p 561
- 8 *Ibid* , pp 571-72
- 9 *Ibid* , pp 572-73
- 10 *Ibid* , p 580
- 11 *Ibid* , p 664
- 12 *Ibid* , p 666
- 13 *Ibid* , p 667
- 14 *Ibid* , pp 667-68

CHRISTALIS

by

GEORGETTE COTY

(Continued from the issue of May 1996)

Forest Party

“COME awake, come awake, Halio! No time to sleep when there is so much delight ahead. Everything is arranged.”

“What? Where? I am a bit sleepy, don’t know why,” I said drowsily.

“I know the reason. You will soon be wide awake.”

He snapped his fingers; a chariot made of flowers landed in front of us. My eyes opened wide, but before I could say how and wherefrom, Christalis pulled me up into this sheer loveliness and we were off. We flew up above the ground, above the forest of the jewelled fruit trees and by the time I was trying to take all of this in, clinging to him for dear life—it had already deposited us in a delightful clearing.

Christalis jumped onto the ground, and chivalrously offered his arm. “Halio, may I invite you to a little party of song and dance arranged in your honour? Arranged by our animal friends.”

He clapped his hands thrice and out came the animal folks from all parts of the forest. They came so fast that I turned from side to side to look at them as they arrived till I thought my head would fall off, yet still more were coming. Flying, gliding, crawling creatures; galloping, prancing and hopping ones... Was there an end to this thrilling procession?

The air was buzzing with my name; greeting sounds, chirping, calling, speaking... speaking? Yes, they were, as men do, only sweeter, and as to their graceful shapes and colours, those were a feast.

“Order, order please!” I heard Christalis call through the maze of sounds. “Everyone line up please! your leaders will bring you to file before us to meet the guest, Halion.” This had an immediate effect; they knew discipline and manners.

First came the crown-wearing lion King and Queen, followed by their kin. Golden-furred, large blue-eyed, lovely animals with ruby-red lips and their tiny cubs were too adorable.

The King stopped before us and bowed his noble head up and down several times and facing me squarely, said: “We greet you, Earth’s Halion, welcome to the world of Light” and all the other animals there repeated the call with one voice. “May we present you,” he continued, “with our offering?”

The place before me was filled in no time with flowers of all kinds, delicious fruits and honey in flower cups that were firm enough to hold them. Twigs of blooms were brought between tiny beaks—and those birds of jewel-coloured feathers carried them—laying it all before me. Glistening, beautiful snakes came, offering light-emitting gems.

Rushing like lightning came from the forest a tiny lion cub and a baby gazelle. They skidded to a stop right in front of the others and in front of us, carrying between them a garland of considerable length.

“Dear Christalis, we have made this garland for the lovely Halio, that is why we are late. Please forgive us, will you allow us to give it to her please... please... please?” They were breathless from running and their beautiful eyes, were half filled with tears for being late, looking at Christalis pleadingly.

‘If I could only take them in my arms,’ I thought, but Christalis pretended to be very serious—“All right then, but you should not have been late—come now, and give it to our guest.”

Hop and another hop, the two adorable ones stood on their hind legs, trying to place it round my neck. ‘Now is my chance to hug and kiss them,’ I said to myself, craning my neck forward to their heights, but would you believe it? Before I could touch them, they said: “Not allowed to kiss us, but may we sit near you, so we can see you all the time, dear Halio?”

Pleading eyes turning to Christalis again, darling heads tilted to one side, waiting for permission. He, very seriously— “All right, but be sweet and quiet, don’t disturb the others. See, they are waiting to come.”

I was beside myself with excitement and would have jumped into their midst, had I not controlled myself for Christalis’s sake. “Dear, lovely friends, how much I love you all!”

“Finish the procession,” called out Christalis, “let us now enjoy your performance. But first, we shall place your gifts in a special place for the time being. You can all help to put them there!”

Those words had immediate effect, each of them took the things they had given me and disappeared with them. They returned in no time and sat down in a circle before a stage that came to be before us. Christalis and I were seated right in front: guests of honour, in two flower chairs.

I kept the garland round my neck with me, and who but the two tiny makers of it took their seats right in front of us, looking at me adoringly instead of looking at the stage. Christalis, half-smiling, pretended not to notice how cleverly they had extended their licences. I could feel how he controlled himself from laughing.

A bell was heard ringing once, twice, and for the third time, each time on a higher note. Two lovely white elephants, their trunks decorated for the occasion, pulled aside the flower curtain. The roaring of a lion was heard as he approached the stage, followed by two slender, spotted deer, blue-coloured golden-horned.

They came forward.

“You have called us, brother; what may we do for you?”

“Thank you for your offers,” said the lion King. “Allow me first to tell our dear guest how much we love one another. None of us bites, harms, or, God forbid, eats any other animal. We eat the fine fruits and nuts and drink honey with juices made of fruits and milk. We are all friends and brothers, taught by the Mother of Love who has given us tongues to speak like men. When the great Light will go to Earth, we will also go down and bring with us joy, love and harmony— and help men with their works.”

Having finished his speech, he made a deep bow and left the stage, the spotted deer trailing behind him, half looking back at us.

Next came a giraffe and four fluffy white rabbits, each tiny tail a tuft of gold. What a sight to see! Acrobats of the forest. The little rabbits hopped over the giraffe’s back, somersaulting, sliding up and down on his long neck with the precision of the finest gymnasts. The monkey musicians did their bit on violins and a chorus of birds sang in silver tones.

It was a delightful event. Not one animal was left out of the performance, no matter how brief be their performances. When all had had a chance to display their acts, Christalis stood up and thanked them for the entertainment and announced to everyone’s jubilation—“And now I invite you all to a little feast.”

“Yes, thank you, thank you! We will come.” They left the place losing no time, only to be found waiting for us already back at another place, where on the lawn tables were set up, covered with good things to be enjoyed.

Flower plates in hundreds, full of sweet things, honey and juicy fruits were laid out to be taken. Not one person was left without a share; the plates kept coming and coming till everyone was satisfied. Christalis himself had brought me a golden plate. “Enjoy this, my very special friend and guest,” he said smiling. Well did he know how much all this had meant to me.

Finally he stood up and called out: “The time is over. Everyone back to your place and work. Our guest and I must do the same. Say your greetings to Halio before going home.”

“Wish you the Light, dear Halio! Please visit us again.” Swoosh and hops and some fast running, they were off into their forest domains.

We were alone once more, my heart was so full of joy I could hardly hold it. “If only the children could share in this,” I said wistfully.

“This will be their share. When you go inside your own heart, you will know that it is coming closer with each passing day.

“Now that we have fulfilled our animal friends’ wishes, I too have one to share with you. But I do think that you have had enough for the day, so can you be ready for me tomorrow? I will be calling early if I can.”

I looked at him lovingly, thankfully, “Blessed be this day, Christalis, and a hundredfold be blessed heaven’s Auropolis, which will come to earth... to

heaven's waiting bride..."

I offered him my hand to take me back to the slumbering bride below.

Moment of Truth in Time

His words came to be the clarion call to my soul, his touch the opening grace of my heart's hidden cave. He and I flew on wings that had no weight. His hands were leading mine to where I was not earth's Lillian, but heaven's Halion—yet both were one.

In this existence illumination and perception merged unhindered by my body's mind. It opened my soul's petals to the light that made it live and grow.

He it was who led me where each plane of reality shone in its own light and each star sang its own harmony. He took me to unparalleled domains of heavenly existences, that show beacons of light to travelling souls, eager to give to them of their own.

None as eager as my beloved friend, nor as I to receive what he gave me. Knowledge and love, patience and knowhow, measuring always in his wisdom what I could receive and hold. I had spent hours reflecting, recalling... filing away, not one morsel wasted... everything treasured, kept safe.

I sat in the garden dreamily now, waiting for his call... Was there ever a time when I did not wait for something marvellous to happen? Something beyond the ordinary? What it was I did not quite know, and if you had asked me I could have given it no name. Yet I knew that there was a source of great things somewhere, and one day I would find it. I was right, Christalis led me to it. I spoke to him inside me:

"Christalis, boy of light, you who came in answer to my call, who planted the flower of hope in my heart and informed me of a bright tomorrow, please plant your light in my people too, give it to our children's hearts, please do!"

"Halio,"—Ah, he had heard me!—"we have met for this aim, you know that. Was it not your constant prayer that brought me to you? Our work goes on."

He stood before me now. Was his radiance brighter than before? I thought it was.

"It is the reflection of your own light you see shining upon me, Halio, none other. I had to come earlier than intended, your heart called me. What is it? Can it wait?"

Something was stirring inside me, I had to ask him something. I was unable to let him leave me.

"Just for a little time, please"—fastening my eyes upon him I pleaded. He sensed the urgency in my voice, because he halted.

... "Beautiful friend of light... much loved Christalis"—I had to bring up a question finally, that lay there waiting in my depths until this moment... It was

pressing its way toward the surface rapidly. He stood alert, waiting...

“Christalis, tell me,” I finally managed to say, “why do I feel that I have always known you, as if you had lived in my heart even before we met?... Christalis, tell me— I never dared to ask this,—who are you to me?”

I looked into his deep eyes and felt at home there, resting in his nearness dreamily. I waited—will there be a reply?

Long silence, he was very serious now, then he took both my hands into his, looking at me for some time before he spoke.

“I was waiting for this question, though in the depth of your being you know the truth, O lovely-souled one.” He spoke the words as dreamily as I had spoken mine.

“Halion, Mother... do know it then now!”... His whole body shone in light... “I am the child of your soul’s longing, become manifest.”

“God above,” I exclaimed... “oh my soul...!”

Neither of us moved, holding hands, this was the moment of truth... a tune known before, returned to be remembered.

I trembled with the recognition of it, stirred to the very core of my being. My eyes full of tears, I looked into his—and saw two tears like pearls well in his eyes... in the ocean eyes of Christalis... Christalis of Omnipole, my boy...

Silence held us in its rapturous fold for a long time, but when he rose from it, he gently closed the door upon it.

(To be continued)

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Eightieth Seminar

25 February 1996

INSIGHT INTO THE VISION AND WORKS OF
SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

INDIA AND THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY

Speech by Ramakrishna Shivashankar

WHEN we look at India today we see that it is still unaware of its real heritage, caught in a deep inertia, and not yet functioning according to its soul. So, one might ask, what was the root-cause for India to have climbed down to such a level. Well, the reason is the fact that of late India has been very powerfully invaded by the influences of modern European culture which are entirely foreign to her own characteristic spirit. And this foreign domination has caused the people of India to lose their self-respect and cease to make any effort to improve themselves

Yet, according to Sri Aurobindo, this present dark situation is just a passing phase. For he decisively assures us saying, "India of the ages is not dead nor has she spoken her last creative word; she lives and has still something to do for herself and the human peoples."¹

Why does he say this? Because in Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's vision of the future India occupies a very significant place. Their vision is of the advent of a New Age in the history of the earth's evolution. It will be created by the manifestation of the supramental truth which will transform our present human life and create a new race of supramental beings living a divine life upon earth. It was for this realisation that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo worked during their life-time and in spite of their apparent departure they are still preoccupied with their mission.

We should also note that they have repeatedly emphasised the point that in the actual realisation of this vision India has a very special role to play because, according to them, India is the destined leader of the world in its march towards a glorious future. They believe that, even though India has suffered a temporary decline in her long history, her mighty Shakti is still alive and is bound to re-arise with renewed strength. This re-arising of the spiritual Shakti will not only lift her up from the present condition and create a new dynamic and luminous life but

will also help other nations of the world to solve their present acute problems and show them the sure way towards a true life of the spirit.

But in order to fulfil this task, first she has to revive her own spiritual culture which is at present in deep tamas. Therefore a new spiritual awakening is needed.

Sri Aurobindo says, "The recovery of the old spiritual knowledge and experience in all its splendour, depth and fullness is its [India's] first, most essential work."²

The Mother also says, "The future of India is very clear. India is the Guru of the world. The future structure of the world depends on India."³ For, as she maintains, "India has become the symbolic representation of all the difficulties of modern mankind. India will be the land of its resurrection – the resurrection to a higher and truer life."⁴

But when will this happen?

To this, the Mother answers, "India shall take her true place in the world only when she will become integrally the messenger of the Divine Life."⁵ It is interesting to note that in Sri Aurobindo's vision of the future humanity there will be a synthesis of Eastern and Western cultures. But one must not misunderstand him by thinking that this will lead to a uniform world-culture in which all diversities will disappear. On the contrary, it will be a harmonious integration of all cultures in which each will retain its diverse and distinctive features. And it is for this reason that Sri Aurobindo strongly emphasizes the necessity for India to defend the uniqueness of her ancient spiritual culture against the dangerous onslaught of European influences which has tremendously increased in recent times.

India must defend herself because, as I have already mentioned, it is India's destined role to be the leader of the world in its evolution from the present rational material stage to the future spiritual and supramental stage. And in order to achieve this Sri Aurobindo advises us, the present young generation: "You cannot cherish these ideals, still less can you fulfil them if you subject your minds to European ideas or look at life from the material standpoint. Materially you are nothing, spiritually you are everything. It is only the Indian who can believe everything, dare everything, sacrifice everything. First, therefore, become Indians."⁶

Now, one may ask what will happen to India if she doesn't wake up from the deep sleep of ignorance. To this too Sri Aurobindo answers explicitly. He says, "There are deeper issues for India herself, since by following certain tempting directions she may conceivably become a nation like many others evolving an opulent industry and commerce, a powerful organisation of social and political life, an immense military strength, practising power-politics with a high degree of

success, guarding and extending zealously her gains and her interests, dominating even a large part of the world, but in this apparently magnificent progression forfeiting its swadharma, losing its soul. Then ancient India and her spirit might disappear altogether and we would have only one more nation like the others and that would be a real gain neither to the world nor to us. There is a question whether she may prosper more harmlessly in the outward life yet lose altogether her richly massed and firmly held spiritual experience and knowledge. It would be a tragic irony of fate if India were to throw away her spiritual heritage at the very moment when in the rest of the world there is more and more a turning towards her for spiritual help and a saving Light. This must not and will surely not happen; but it cannot be said that the danger is not there. There are indeed other numerous and difficult problems that face this country or will very soon face it. No doubt we will win through but we must not disguise from ourselves the fact that after these long years of subjection and its cramping and impairing effects a great inner as well as outer liberation and change, a vast inner and outer progress is needed if we are to fulfil India's destiny."⁷

References

- 1 *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (Cent Ed , Vol 14), pp 380-81.
- 2 *The Message and Mission of India* by Sri Aurobindo (Compiled by Rishabhchand), 1964
- 3 *Words of the Mother, Collected Works of the Mother*, (Cent Ed , Vol 13), p 361
- 4 *Ibid* , p 376
- 5 *Ibid* , p 380
- 6 *The Ideal of the Karmayogin* (Cent Ed , Vol 2), p 20
- 7 *On Himself* (Cent Ed , Vol 26), pp 412-13