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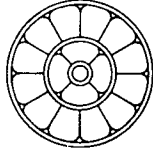
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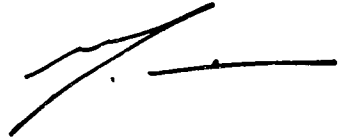


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. L

No. 11

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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DRIVEN FROM WITHIN SHE FOLLOWED HER ROAD

THE world-ways opened before Savitri
At first a strangeness of new brilliant scenes
Peopled her mind and kept her body's gaze.
But as she moved across the changing earth
A deeper consciousness welled up in her
A citizen of many scenes and climes,
Each soil and country it has made its home,
It took all clans and peoples for her own,
Till the whole destiny of mankind was hers
These unfamiliar spaces on her way
Were known and neighbours to a sense within,
Landscapes recurred like lost forgotten fields,
Cities and rivers and plains her vision claimed
Like slow recurring memories in front,
The stars at night were her past's brilliant friends,
The winds murmured to her of ancient things
And she met nameless comrades loved by her once.
All was a part of old forgotten selves
Vaguely or with a flash of sudden hints
Her acts recalled a line of bygone power,
Even her motion's purpose was not new
Traveller to a prefigured high event,
She seemed to her remembering witness soul
To trace again a journey often made .
Upon her silent heights she was aware
Of a calm Presence throned above her brows
Who saw the goal and chose each fateful curve;
It used the body for its pedestal,
The eyes that wandered were its searchlight fires,
The hands that held the reins its living tools;
All was the working of an ancient plan,
A way prepared by an unerring Guide.. .
Driven from within she followed her long road,
Mute in the luminous cavern of her heart,
Like a bright cloud through the resplendent day
At first her path ran far through peopled tracts .
Often from gilded dusk to argent dawn .
Dimly she glided between banks of sleep
At rest in the slumbering palaces of kings.
Hamlet and village saw the fate-van pass,

Homes of a life bent to the soil it ploughs
 For sustenance of its short and passing days
 That, transient, keep their old repeated course
 Unchanging in the circle of a sky
 Which alters not above our mortal toil
 Away from this thinking creature's burdened hours
 To free and griefless spaces now she turned

As floats a sunbeam through a shady place,
 The golden virgin in her carven car
 Came gliding among meditation's seats
 Often in twilight mid returning troops
 Of cattle thickening with their dust the shades
 When the loud day had slipped below the verge,
 Arriving in a peaceful hermit grove
 She rested drawing round her like a cloak
 Its spirit of patient muse and potent prayer.
 Or near to a lion river's tawny mane
 And trees that worshipped on a praying shore,
 A domed and templed air's serene repose
 Beckoned to her hurrying wheels to stay their speed
 In the solemnity of a space that seemed
 A mind remembering ancient silences,
 Where to the heart great bygone voices called
 And the large liberty of brooding seers
 Had left the long impress of their soul's scene
 Awake in candid dawn or darkness mooned,
 To the still touch inclined the daughter of Flame
 Drank in hushed splendour between tranquil lids
 And felt the kinship of eternal calm .
 Thence to great solitary tracts she came ..
 The mountains in their anchorite solitude,
 The forests with their multitudinous chant
 Disclosed to her the masked divinity's doors .
 Still unaccomplished was the fateful quest,
 Still she found not the one predestined face
 For which she sought amid the sons of men.
 A grandiose silence wrapped the regal day

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 377-385)

THE VEDA—THE WORD DISCOVERING THE TRUTH

THE early mind of India in the magnificent youth of the nation, when a fathomless spiritual insight was at work, a subtle intuitive vision and a deep, clear and greatly outlined intellectual and ethical thinking and heroic action and creation which founded and traced the plan and made the permanent structure of her unique culture and civilisation, is represented by four of the supreme productions of her genius, the Veda, the Upanishads and the two vast epics, and each of them is of a kind, a form and an intention not easily paralleled in any other literature. The two first are the visible foundation of her spiritual and religious being, the others a large creative interpretation of her greatest period of life, of the ideas that informed and the ideals that governed it and the figures in which she saw man and Nature and God and the powers of the universe. The Veda gave us the first types and figures of these things as seen and formed by an imaged spiritual intuition and psychological and religious experience, the Upanishads constantly breaking through and beyond form and symbol and image without entirely abandoning them, since always they come in as accompaniment or undertone, reveal in a unique kind of poetry the ultimate and unsurpassable truths of self and God and man and the world and its principles and powers in their most essential, their profoundest and most intimate and their most ample realities,—highest mysteries and clarities vividly seen in an irresistible, an unvalled perception that has got through the intuitive and psychological to the sheer spiritual vision. And after that we have powerful and beautiful developments of the intellect and the life and of ideal, ethical, aesthetic, psychic, emotional and sensuous and physical knowledge and idea and vision and experience of which the epics are the early record and the rest of the literature the continuation, but the foundation remains the same throughout, and whatever new and often larger types and significant figures replace the old or intervene to add and modify and alter the whole ensemble, are in their essential build and character transmutations and extensions of the original vision and first spiritual experience and never an unconnected departure. There is a persistence, a continuity of the Indian mind in its literary creation in spite of great changes as consistent as that which we find in painting and sculpture.

The Veda is the creation of an early intuitive and symbolical mentality to which the later mind of man, strongly intellectualised and governed on the one side by reasoning idea and abstract conception, on the other hand by the facts of life and matter accepted as they present themselves to the senses and positive intelligence without seeking in them for any divine or mystic significance, indulging the imagination as a play of the aesthetic fancy rather than as an opener of the doors of truth and only trusting to its suggestions when they are confirmed by the logical reason or by physical experience, aware only of carefully intellectualised intuitions and recalcitrant for the most part to any others, has grown a total stranger. It is not surprising therefore that the Veda should have become unintelligible to our minds except in its most outward shell of language, and that even very imperfectly known owing to the obstacle of an antique

and ill-understood diction, and that the most inadequate interpretations should be made which reduce this great creation of the young and splendid mind of humanity to a botched and defaced scrawl, an incoherent hotchpotch of the absurdities of a primitive imagination perplexing what would be otherwise the quite plain, flat and common record of a naturalistic religion which mirrored only and could only minister to the crude and materialistic desires of a barbaric life-mind. The Veda became to the later scholastic and ritualistic idea of Indian priests and Pundits nothing better than a book of mythology and sacrificial ceremonies; European scholars seeking in it for what was alone to them of any rational interest, the history, myths and popular religious notions of a primitive people, have done yet worse wrong to the Veda and by insisting on a wholly external rendering still farther stripped it of its spiritual interest and its poetic greatness and beauty.

But this was not what it was to the Vedic Rishis themselves or to the great seers and thinkers who came after them and developed out of their pregnant and luminous intuitions their own wonderful structures of thought and speech built upon an unexampled spiritual revelation and experience. The Veda was to these early seers the Word discovering the Truth and clothing in image and symbol the mystic significances of life. It was a divine discovery and unveiling of the potencies of the word, of its mysterious revealing and creative capacity, not the word of the logical and reasoning or the aesthetic intelligence, but the intuitive and inspired rhythmic utterance, the *mantra*. Image and myth were freely used, not as an imaginative indulgence, but as living parables and symbols of things that were very real to their speakers and could not otherwise find their own intimate and native shape in utterance, and the imagination itself was a priest of greater realities than those that meet and hold the eye and mind limited by the external suggestions of life and the physical existence. This was their idea of the sacred poet,—a mind visited by some highest light and its forms of idea and word, a seer and hearer of the Truth, *kavayah satyaśrutayah*. The poets of the Vedic verse certainly did not regard their function as it is represented by modern scholars, they did not look on themselves as a sort of superior medicine-men and makers of hymn and incantation to a robust and barbarous tribe, but as seers and thinkers, *ṛṣi, dhīra*. These singers believed that they were in possession of a high, mystic and hidden truth, claimed to be the bearers of a speech acceptable to a divine knowledge, and expressly so speak of their utterances, as secret words which declare their whole significance only to the seer, *kavaye nivacanāni nūna vacāmsi*. And to those who came after them the Veda was a book of knowledge, and even of the supreme knowledge, a revelation, a great utterance of eternal and impersonal truth as it had been seen and heard in the inner experience of inspired and semi-divine thinkers. The smallest circumstances of the sacrifice around which the hymns were written were intended to carry a symbolic and psychological power of significance, as was well known to the writers of the ancient Brahmanas. The sacred verses, each by itself held to be full of a divine meaning, were taken by the thinkers of the Upanishads as the profound and pregnant seed-words of the truth they sought, and the highest authority they could give for their own sublime

utterances was a supporting citation from their predecessors with the formula, *tad esā ṛcābhyuktā*, “This is that word which was spoken by the Rīg-veda” Western scholars choose to imagine that the successors of the Vedic Rīshis were in error, that, except for some later hymns, they put a false and non-existent meaning into the old verses and that they themselves, divided from the Rīshis not only by ages of time but by many gulfs and separating seas of an intellectualised mentality, know infinitely better. But mere common sense ought to tell us that those who were so much nearer in both ways to the original poets had a better chance of holding at least the essential truth of the matter and suggests at least the strong probability that the Veda was really what it professes to be, the seeking for a mystic knowledge, the first form of the constant attempt of the Indian mind, to which it has always been faithful, to look beyond the appearances of the physical world and through its own inner experiences to the godheads, powers, self-existence of the One of whom the sages speak variously—the famous phrase in which the Veda utters its own central secret, *ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti*

The real character of the Veda can best be understood by taking it anywhere and rendering it straightforwardly according to its own phrases and images. A famous German scholar rating from his high pedestal of superior intelligence the silly persons who find sublimity in the Veda, tells us that it is full of childish, silly, even monstrous conceptions, that it is tedious, low, commonplace, that it represents human nature on a low level of selfishness and worldliness and that only here and there are a few rare sentiments that come from the depths of the soul. It may be made so if we put our own mental conceptions into the words of the Rīshis, but if we read them as they are without any such false translation into what we think early barbarians ought to have said and thought, we shall find instead a sacred poetry sublime and powerful in its words and images, though with another kind of language and imagination than we now prefer and appreciate, deep and subtle in its psychological experience and stirred by a moved soul of vision and utterance. Hear rather the word itself of the Veda:*

States upon states are born, covering over covering!¹ awakens to knowledge. in the lap of the Mother he wholly sees. They have called to him, getting a wide knowledge, they guard sleeplessly the strength, they have entered into the strong city. The peoples born on earth increase the luminous (force) of the son of the White Mother, he has gold on his neck, he is large of speech, he is as if by (the power of) this honey-wine a seeker of plenty. He is like pleasant and desirable milk, he is a thing unaccompanied and is with the two who are companions and is as a heat that is the belly of plenty and is invincible and an overcomer of many. Play, O Ray, and manifest thyself.² (Rīg Veda V 19)

* The original Rīks and their rendering as we have in ŚRĪ Aurobindo's *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* are given in the next article, pp 832-834 —Editor

1 Or, “the coverer of the coverer”

2 Literally, “become towards us”

Or again in the succeeding hymn,—

Those (flames) of thee, the forceful (godhead), that move not and are increased and puissant, unclinging the hostility and crookedness of one who has another law O Fire, we choose thee for our priest and the means of effectuation of our strength and in the sacrifices bringing the food of thy pleasure we call thee by the word . O god of perfect works, may we be for the felicity, for the truth, revelling with the rays, revelling with the heroes

And finally let us take the bulk of the third hymn that follows couched in the ordinary symbols of the sacrifice,—

As the Manu we set thee in thy place, as the Manu we kindle thee O Fire, O Angiras, as the Manu sacrifice to the gods for him who desires the godheads O Fire, well pleased thou art kindled in the human being and the ladles go to thee continually . Thee all the gods with one pleasure (in thee) made their messenger and serving thee, O seer, (men) in the sacrifices adore the god Let the mortal adore the divine Fire with sacrifice to the godheads. Kindled, flame forth, O Bright One Sit in the seat of Truth, sit in the seat of peace.³

That, whatever interpretation we choose to put on its images, is a mystic and symbolic poetry and that is the real Veda .

The Veda thus understood stands out, apart from its interest as the world's first yet extant Scripture, its earliest interpretation of man and the Divine and the universe, as a remarkable, a sublime and powerful poetic creation It is in its form and speech no barbaric production. The Vedic poets are masters of a consummate technique, their rhythms are carved like chariots of the gods and borne on divine and ample wings of sound, and are at once concentrated and wide-waved, great in movement and subtle in modulation, their speech lyric by intensity and epic by elevation, an utterance of great power, pure and bold and grand in outline, a speech direct and brief in impact, full to overflowing in sense and suggestion so that each verse exists at once as a strong and sufficient thing in itself and takes its place as a large step between what came before and what comes after A sacred and hieratic tradition faithfully followed gave them both their form and substance, but this substance consisted of the deepest psychic and spiritual experiences of which the human soul is capable and the forms seldom or never degenerate into a convention, because what they are intended to convey was lived in himself by each poet and made new to his own mind in expression by the subtleties or sublimities of his individual vision The utterances of the greatest seers, Vishwamitra, Vamadeva, Dirghatamas and many others, touch the most extraordinary heights and amplitudes of a sublime and mystic poetry and there are poems like the Hymn of

³ I have translated these passages with as close a literalness as the English language will admit Let the reader compare the original and judge whether this is not the sense of the verses

Creation that move in a powerful clarity on the summits of thought on which the Upanishads lived constantly with a more sustained breathing The mind of ancient India did not err when it traced back all its philosophy, religion and essential things of its culture to these seer-poets, for all the future spirituality of her people is contained there in seed or in first expression.

SRI AUROBINDO

(The Foundations of Indian Culture, SABCL, Vol 14, pp 258-267)

THREE VEDIC HYMNS TO THE MYSTIC FIRE

RIG VEDA V.19

अभ्यवस्थाः प्र जायन्ते प्र वव्रेर्विन्निश्चिकेत ।
उपस्थे मातुर्वि चष्टे ॥१॥

1. State upon state is born, covering upon covering has become conscious and aware, in the lap of the mother he sees

जुहुरे वि चितयन्तोऽनिमिषं नृम्ण पान्ति ।
आ दृळ्हां पुरं विविशुः ॥२॥

2. Awakening to an entire knowledge they have called and guard a sleepless strength, they have entered the strong fortified city.

आ श्वेत्रेयस्य जन्तवो द्युमद् वर्धन्त कृष्टयः ।
निष्कग्नीवो बृहदुक्थ एना मध्वा न वाजयुः ॥३॥

3. Creatures born, men who people the earth have increased the luminosity of the son of the white mother, his neck wears the golden necklace, he has the utterance of the Vast, and with his honey-wine he is the seeker of the plenitude

प्रियं दुग्धं न काम्यमजामि जाम्योः सचा ।
घर्मो न वाजजठरोऽदब्धः शश्वतो दभः ॥४॥

4. He is as if the delightful and desirable milk of the mother, he is that which is unaccompanied abiding with the two companions, he is the blaze of the light, and the belly of the plenitude, he is the eternal invincible and the all-conqueror

क्रीळन् नो रश्म आ भुवः सं भस्मना वायुना वेविदानः ।
ता अस्य सन् धृषजो न तिग्माः सुसंशिता वक्ष्यो वक्षणेस्थाः ॥५॥

5. O Ray, mayst thou be with us and play with us, unifying thy knowledge with the shining of the breath of life; may those flames of him be for us violent and intense and keenly whetted, strong to carry and settled in the breast

*

RIG VEDA V.20

यमग्ने वाजसातम त्वं चिन् मन्यसे रयिम् ।
तं नो गीर्भिः श्रवाय्यं देवत्रा पनया युजम् ॥१॥

- 1 O Fire, O thou who art most strong to conquer the plenitudes, the wealth which thou holdest in mind that make full of inspiration by the words and set it to work in the gods as our ally

ये अग्ने नेरयन्ति ते वृद्धा उग्रस्य शवसः ।
अप द्वेषो अप ह्वरोऽन्यन्नतस्य सश्चिरे ॥२॥

2. They have grown on thy forceful strength. O Fire, yet impel us not on the way, they fall away and cleave to the hostility, cleave to the crookedness of one who has a law alien to thine

होतारं त्वा वृणीमहेऽग्ने दक्षस्य साधनम् ।
यज्ञेषु पूर्व्यं गिरा प्रयस्वन्तो हवामहे ॥३॥

- 3 Thee, O Fire, the ancient one, we choose in our sacrifices as the Priest of the call, one who accomplishes a discerning knowledge, and bringing the pleasant offering we call thee by the word.

इत्था यथा त ऊतये सहसावन् दिवेदिवे ।
राय ऋताय सुक्रतो गीभिः ष्याम सधमादो वीरैः स्याम सधमादः ॥४॥

- 4 So rightly make it that we may live in thy protection and that we may grow towards the Truth day by day, O forceful Fire, O strong in will, together rejoicing in the light of the Ray-Cow, together rejoicing in the strength of the Heroes

+

RIG VEDA V.21

मनुष्वत् त्वा नि धीमहि मनुष्वत् समिधीमहि ।
अग्ने मनुष्वदङ्गिरो देवान् देवयते यज ॥१॥

1. As the human we set thee within us, as the human we kindle thee, O Fire, O Angiras, as the human offer sacrifice to the gods for the seeker of the godheads.

त्वं हि मानुषे जनेऽग्ने सुप्रीत इध्यसे ।
सुचस्त्वा यन्त्यानुषक् सुजात सर्पिरासुते ॥२॥

- 2 O Fire, thou art kindled in the human being and well-satisfied, unceasing ladles go to thee. O perfect in thy birth, O thou who receivest as oblation the stream of his clarities!

त्वां विश्वे सजोषसो देवासो दूतमक्रत ।
सपर्यन्तस्त्वा कवे यज्ञेषु देवमीळते ॥३॥

- 3 Thee all the gods with one mind of acceptance made their envoy; men serving thee pray thee as the godhead in their sacrifices, O seer

देवं वो देवयज्ययाऽग्निमीळीत मर्त्यः ।
समिद्धः शुक्र दीदिहि ऋतस्य योनिमासदः ससस्य योनिमासदः ॥४॥

4. Let mortal man with will to the divine sacrifice to you, pray to the divine Fire; O brilliant Flame. high-kindled shine, mayst thou take thy seat in the native home of the Truth, take thy seat in the native home of the peace.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, SABCL, Vol 11, pp 231-34)

DYUMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of October 1997)

Mother,

He takes extra bread and gives it to the gardener and his daughters. He gets slices from the tiffin-carriers of others and this too he gives to them. If he asks for more slices, it is secretly for this purpose. I do not think we can allow such things to develop.

GIVE him the number of slices he used to take and *nothing more*. If he asks why, you have only to answer, "Mother's orders"

c 1934

Mother,

People are complaining about milk spilling in the tiffin-carriers. When the carriers are opened, we fill them like this. Bread comes first and we put it in the bottom pot. Then come the vegetables, we put them in the next pot. Last of all comes the milk and it goes in the top pot. Now when the carriers are sent off on the cart, the milk sometimes drops down by the jerks of the cart and spoils the vegetables and bread. So people have begun to ask for the milk to be served in the bottom pot. This means at least four times the labour and time for the workers.

In my heart I feel that if we give food, why not give it in a better condition? But my mind refuses to yield, it says that those who are so particular should come and take away their carriers themselves.

Mother, please decide for me

It seems to me that it is only a question of organisation of the work. Why not have all the pots of each tiffin-carrier spread in row, in the order in which they have to be placed afterwards, like this: 1 2 3 4 (1 is top, 4 is bottom)?

Logically, 1 must contain bread
2 " " vegetables
3 " " rice
4 " " milk or curds

Each thing is served in the corresponding pot as soon as it is ready (that is to say, bread first, vegetables afterwards, etc.) and the tiffin-carriers are remounted *only when all is served*, which allows the milk to be put at the bottom.

I hope I have been clear in my explanation about how to deal with the tiffin-carriers. Of course two minutes' practical demonstration of how to do it would make it clearer and easier to understand. If something is still obscure, I shall call you and explain how to do it. The only objection you can make to my proposal is the space needed to spread 50 to 60 tiffin-carriers. But perhaps it is quite possible to manage the required space.

c 1934

My dear Mother,

The old plantain-vendor has vacated the market and a new man has opened a shop now This morning the old vendor sent the plantains directly to us and he wants to continue this way But when I went to the market I saw the new merchant. He will bring the rate down to 10 annas per 100 plantains, this includes home-delivery and the selection is ours The old vendor was charging 12 annas for 100, plus coolie charges

It is better to put them in competition with one another. not only *for price* (I do not see why we should pay more than 10 annas when we can have them at that price) but also *for quality* And for that we must try the new man and see how he behaves with us and what is the quality of his goods.

1 January 1935

My dear Mother,

J is suffering badly from cough and has a fever, so she has become weak I think perhaps it would be better if she does not move out much and takes rest

The remaining at home brings depression and it is the worst thing for this illness—but she must not do hard work, and remain in the sun and the open air as much as possible.

3 January 1935

My dear Mother,

Today K cried and cried for one hour in my room, for reasons I do not know

If only she wrote about it and said the reason—if there is any—of such an upsetting, she would be cured at once

5 January 1935

Dear Mother,

Serving food to the inmates after fixed hours. for the late-comers, breakfast goes up to 10.30 a.m , lunch up to 3 30 p.m and dinner up to 9 30 p m There are nearly 40 late-comers And they go on asking for slices of bread People take more slices on one day and the next day they return them. What shall we do with the slices afterwards?

Dear Mother, money-lending is also going on in the Ashram! I thought that You alone deal in money.

Yes. people are irregular, fanciful, unscrupulous, undisciplined, disobedient. .but there is only to keep a steady, quiet will and to be patient—all that will come to an end, one day

I am always with you in your advance towards realisation

7 January 1935

My dear Mother,

The condition of milk we are not sure of receiving the required amount of milk in the morning, yet people come forward to take 2 or 3, even 4 cups of milk in the morning This makes the D R workers nervous and anxious about the noon-time distribution of milk Suppose I get 3 cups of milk for the whole day, and I begin to take 2 cups at one time—it creates a disturbance in the distribution for the D R

I understand that it is very difficult for the people who serve and that the inmates are very exacting—but on their side is it not that the servers are anxious more for their own convenience than for that of the others?

My dear Mother, I ask for more patience, more quietness, more peace and for a more perfect equanimity

Yes—for the growth of equanimity one must learn to see things from many points of view and especially from the point of those who oppose us—not in order to agree with them but to understand better their point of view Let the peace and a quiet strength always inhabit your heart and your head

11 January 1935

My dear Mother,

Make me constantly a sadhak of the yoga May I remain a sadhak all the time and not only when I come to You for Pranam

Indeed this is a very important thing for everybody

With all love and blessings

11 January 1935

(To be continued)

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SRI AUROBINDO'S SPIRITUAL SYSTEM AND THE MOTHER'S CONTRIBUTION TO IT

(Continued from the issue of October 1997)

(d)

To revert to our subject Perhaps our research will one day flash out for us the moment when Sri Aurobindo in the period before the Victory Day parted the highest Cosmic Consciousness from the sheer Transcendence According to his own admission¹ on 20 November 1933, he did it “fully” not before the sadhana was precipitated into the physical. But “the negative answer”, which rules out the period immediately after the Siddhi-Day no less than the one prior to it, lays overstress on this precipitation The adverb “fully” implies complete confirmation, final conviction surely a practical certainty could precede them? The actual words of Sri Aurobindo are: “The difficulty comes when we deal with the vital and still more [when we deal] with the physical Then it becomes imperative to face the difficulty and make a sharp distinction between Overmind and Supermind ” The expression “still more” points to the enhancement of an existing perception, not to an altogether fresh discovery As soon as the difficulty arises in relation to the vital, the Overmind can no longer be considered just “an inferior plane of the supermind” as it can during the time one has been “seeing them from the Mind” The distinction, if not razor-sharp as yet, is bound to be sharp enough to activate the discriminating intuition

In other words, even before the Overmind lustres are turned upon Matter in order to penetrate, enlighten and divinise its *tamas*, its fixity filled with unconsciousness—even when they are focused on the Life-Force's *rajas*, its energy lost in self-assertive turbulence, we are already far advanced on the way which culminates in certainty From the time the sadhana came down into the vital Sri Aurobindo struck with accumulating confidence upon the momentous truth that here was not any genuine prelude of the supreme all-transformative power which in his own ascent overhead he had visioned and experienced

The proof of our contention lies in our knowledge that around the end of 1926 the Overmind's cleavage from the Supermind had already been realised that is, several months before Sri Aurobindo and the Mother brought the sadhana down into the physical and started working from the physical consciousness under most oppressive conditions.

If we could find out—to match our information about the time the sadhana was precipitated into the physical—the time it began on the vital plane, we should have some basis for ascertaining when exactly the Overmind as a separate entity from the

¹ *On Himself* SABCL, Vol 26 pp 369-70

Supermind sprang into Sri Aurobindo's perception. Was the beginning marked by the event of 24 November? There is no statement anywhere that it was, we are only told that it was going on in the days subsequent to it. The question is how long before did it commence?

In the talk of 6 November 1926, recorded by Purani, Sri Aurobindo tells a disciple "when you are doing the Sadhana in the mind, then outer activities like the *Arya* and writing, etc., can go on. But when I came down to the vital I stopped all that."¹ We may also cite Chidanandam's corroboration. The Master tells a disciple about the process of supramental descent "It is a silent work. Publicity attracts hostile forces. You can do outside work only when it is in you to do so. When you are doing sadhana in the mind, you can do it. I wrote the *Arya* at the time of such sadhana. When I came to the vital plane, I had to stop all that."² We may be tempted to attribute the stopping of the *Arya* to one sole cause—the coming down of the sadhana to the vital plane. This would give us January 1921 as approximately our date. But we would be indulging in too cut-and-dried a procedure. There may have been more than one reason why Sri Aurobindo discontinued his periodical. We cannot be certain, either, that the vital sadhana did not begin earlier. The *Arya* may have gone on for a while after its beginning. A broad clue to the general situation may be gleaned from the Mother's talk of 25 August 1954. There she says

"... when I began with Sri Aurobindo to descend, for the yoga, from the mind into the vital I was forty at that time. I didn't look old, I looked younger than forty, but still I was forty—and after a month's yoga I looked exactly eighteen. And someone who had seen me before, who had lived with me in Japan and came here, found it difficult to recognise me. He asked me, 'But, really, is it you?' I said, 'Obviously!' Only when we descended from the vital into the physical, then it was gone, for in the physical the work is much harder. It was because there were many more things to change."

If we took the Mother's chronology literally, we should have 1918 as the date for the shift of Yoga to the vital plane, for in that year the Mother, who was born in 1878, would have been forty. But in 1918 she was still in Japan. Only on 24 April 1920 she returned to Pondicherry after a little more than five years' absence. The joint Yoga shift is most likely to have taken place subsequent to this date. The Mother was often rather vague in chronological matters. In the very talk from which we have quoted, she admitted as much when she said that she could not tell precisely in what year had arrived on earth temporarily the power and personality of Ananda which, unlike her four great powers and personalities—Maheswari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati—had never appeared in the manifestation so far, she could only declare that it had arrived before Sri Aurobindo left his body (5 December 1950). When a disciple mentioned 1946 she felt he was right, and answered: "Yes." What we can affirm with certainty in the present case is in reference to "someone" whom she had known well in

1 *Evening Talks*, Second Series, p. 295

2 *Mother India*, July 1970, p. 333

Japan and who later visited her in Pondicherry. The person concerned was W. W. Pearson who had been with Tagore in Japan in 1916 when the Mother too had been in that country. He visited Pondicherry on 17 April 1923.¹ His surprise at finding the Mother looking like an eighteen-year-old although in fact she was forty-five proves the shift with Sri Aurobindo to the vital to have been made earlier. Thus we have positively the *terminus ad quem*, the lower limit. The upper limit, the *terminus a quo*, seems in all probability on the evidence available to lie between 24 April 1920 and the month of the *Arya's* last issue.

But surely we do not have here "the difficulty" which Sri Aurobindo speaks of in dealing with the vital. Up to 1923 no particular difficulty seems present. Again, immediately following the Overmind's descent there was no difficulty as such: the descent brought a tremendous spurt of glory on the vital plane. Between 1923 and 1926 the obstacles leading to awareness of the Overmind's insufficiency for transformation must have reared their heads.

So, in that interval of three years, the real nature of the Overmind as being no part of the supreme Truth-Consciousness was gradually disclosed, the specific name for it approached and the final definition of Supermind developed.

Some aspects of the process are hinted at in the reports kept by Purani and Chidanandam. But we can draw no complete picture of it from them. Several of their elements leave us in a blur. We might have been helped if there had been private records of Sri Aurobindo himself, such as those which yielded to us the mention of the Overmind Gnosis. Unfortunately no diary-notes of the Master from 1920 to 1926 exist. All we are left with is the sense of the time-span within which the process must have taken place.

(To be continued)

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

¹ Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, p. 185

“INSPIRATIONS FOR PROGRESS”

(Continued from the issue of October 1997)

No Excess

ASPIRATION must be constant and ardent, but there should be no excessive straining and pulling That always disturbs the system

A quiet steady poise must always be maintained and all things must be done in right measure

No over-eager hasty pulling at the Force, but a very quiet and steady opening to it—that is what is needed

Also great patience Necessary time for the needed change to work out must be allowed Assimilation by body of the Force received also needs time

I must now cure myself of this tendency to excess and haste It is that that makes my progress to a considerable extent an uneven and disturbing movement

Now that I have a sure opening to and a constant connection with Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s Force and Presence, I must give up all straining I must learn to leave myself in Their Hands relying with deep trust on Them to carry me forward on the Path

4 2 1961

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I have constantly noticed that whenever a period (a day or two) of difficulty comes, it is invariably followed by a better condition than before—some progress is definitely made

In the process of transformation, especially in the vital and the physical, so long as the psychic has not fully come forward, temporary periods of difficulty are bound to come

But when such periods come it is best to remember the following points and keep them firmly fixed in mind against all contrary suggestions

- 1) They are only temporary—a day or two—and will surely be followed by better conditions than before
- 2) They point to some wrong movement or formation in the nature With a calm and clear mind this should be found out and offered to Mother for removal, rejecting with one’s will as best one can
- 3) Such periods cannot be altogether avoided even by the best natures When they come they should be endured with equanimity as part of the work to be done
- 4) Often they are not due to personal reasons They are a part of the general movement of sadhana and of the Supramental action for world-change They should be endured with equanimity in a spirit of impersonality and collaboration
- 5) During such periods, short or long, mild or acute, care must be taken not to allow

any suggestions of fear, doubt, guilt or sadness to enter into and fix themselves on the consciousness Perfect equanimity, entire trust in Mother, complete certitude of the Lord's Victory and as much cheerfulness as possible—this is the right attitude and if it is firmly taken the periods of difficulty become much shorter and are followed by a much better progress than when the opposite attitude of doubt and despair, etc is allowed or entertained.

- 6) The most important thing is to remember always that Mother and the Lord are constantly with us at every step of the journey and, if we take refuge in Their Arms, Their Almighty Protection and All-Powerful Love will always *be* with *us* and They will carry us to the Goal through every difficulty

Complete Surrender—

Absolute Trust—

Unflinching Certitude—

Constant Remembrance of Their Presence—

—with these Victory is absolutely certain

5 2 1961

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The best way to get energy and strength—physical, vital, mental, spiritual—is to ask for it from Mother for the Lord's service

She is the Supreme Infinite Shakti and she is ever willing and ready to grant it inexhaustively for the Lord's service

Do not think of energy or strength as a personal thing and do not ask for it from Mother for personal reasons.

Ask, always ask, ask ever more and more for it from Her for the Great Work of the Lord that has to be done, and that is now imminently pressing for realisation on earth

She will give it unfailingly—She will fill you with inexhaustible energy and tireless strength for the Lord's service

Forget your personal limitations

Aspire only to collaborate wholly in the Lord's Work

Put yourself in Her Hands

Then there is no limit to what She can do through you

7 2 1961

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Never allow your difficulties or defects to limit or condition your aspiration

Always, in all circumstances, keep your central aspiration of union with the Lord sincere, ardent, whole-hearted, confident

In addition, aspire always to rise higher and higher in each thing

Aspire always whole-heartedly in all things for the highest—whatever may be

your present defects or difficulties

But for the fulfilment of your aspiration do not depend upon your own capacity or strength, but upon His All-Power and Grace

Be always *absolutely confident* that if your aspiration is sincere, whole-hearted, persistent and if you depend on Him for the fulfilment, He will surely fulfil it.

Do not shrink from aspiring for the Highest from any sense of your incapacity. His Omnipotence is always at your disposal to lift you up ever higher and higher and eventually to the Highest goal—union with Him

Aspire, ever more sincerely, ardently, confidently for the Highest in all things

7 2 1961

*

The art of life consists in doing *the right thing* at each moment—just *that* and no other

The problem is: how to find it out?

The right thing in each case is Mother's Will Mother's Will is Divine Will and that is for the least little things

The only way to find it out is

- 1) To want it sincerely, whole-heartedly, desperately
- 2) To ask for it—and to wait for it in a quiet receptive consciousness
- 3) Keep out desire-pushes and ego-preferences, even the most subtle
- 4) Always and constantly and more and more to open to Her Consciousness, receive and absorb it.
- 5) To surrender to Her with entire trust and depend on Her for all things with assured confidence

If this way is followed then she will take your entire life out of your fumbling hands into Her All-Knowing and All-Powerful Hands It is She who will live in you She will carry you very tangibly in Her Arms

Then all burden falls away from life. all personal responsibility for your actions is gone.

There can be no greater delight than this—this should *now* quickly be done

8 2 1961

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In the work of Transformation, *which has to be done*, defects and difficulties will always arise, so long as they are there in the nature, for clearance.

They will not only arise but press, intensify and recur when a resolute pressure is put on them for removal

So their arising, intensification or recurrence must not be allowed to dishearten us or make us despair in our endeavour It should be taken as something natural and to be expected on the path—as part of the work to be done.

What is necessary is to take a right attitude towards the defects and difficulties and to deal with them in the right consciousness and right manner

If this is done difficulties and defects actually become occasions for greater progress, hindrances and obstacles become opportunities for a surer advance

We must learn to make creative use of our weaknesses and obstacles rather than allow them to pull or break us down

16 2 1961

(To be continued)

KISHOR GANDHI

(Compiled by Arvind Akki)



CENTRES

A RUBY centre wakes a violent dream
 A nomad heart arrogant, strong, untame
 A saffron-core brings the far footsteps of light—
 A brilliant sigh of earth to reach the vast
 A sky-blue point within becomes a flame
 Whose peripheries were the petalled infinite
 A gold sun-soul awakes above a crown
 Whose nucleus-noon was the sky-breath of God
 Behind unstained a diamond centre is unveiled
 A white unmanifest core of the Unnamed

26-8-61

ROMEN

(From the late poet's unpublished diaries)

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER IN GIGANTIC BODIES

A VISION OF 7 JANUARY 1980

SRI AUROBINDO was taking his meal in some new building. There were no lights in the room, but it appeared as if light was spreading out from Him in various colours. Finally, golden light was seen; the whole room was filled with it. Now, Sri Aurobindo was not seen, instead a heap of golden diamonds was there. The golden diamonds were very big, each one being more precious than the other. The smallest one was about one foot long, the others were even bigger than that. The heap slowly started rising up and expanding on all sides. Streams of various colours were flowing out of it. At last, snow-white light was seen and in the place of diamonds a huge lotus was there. Now, the room was no longer there, but in a vast place beyond one's imagination a huge, luminous, golden lotus was seen in which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in their huge bodies were gloriously seated. Then, from the illumined place around them, several individuals came out. Beautiful small children were also seen. All of them were moving around Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. One by one, they went to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and offered their salutations, but subsequently they were not seen getting up. Finally, I also went for salutations. My one hand was held by the Mother and the other by Sri Aurobindo. Both of them had their free hands on my head. I put my head first in the Mother's lap and then in Sri Aurobindo's. Then I put my head between them and the Mother covered it with the top part of her saree. Afterwards, my entire body was covered. I do not know what happened later on.

The vision ended, my eyes opened.

CHAMPAKLAL

(Visions of Champaklal, p 113)

A JOURNEY TO DARJEELING AND BACK IN TIME



A PHOTOGRAPH of young Aurobindo was taken from Pondicherry to Darjeeling for its installation at the Loreto Convent on 14 August 1996. In some respects this was a long journey back in time, 120 years to be precise. Young Aurobindo's father, K. D. Ghose, wanted his children to be raised in strict accordance with European values and to be provided with an English education. Hence, young Aurobindo along with his brothers was first sent to an Irish Nuns' School in Darjeeling to begin education. This Irish Nuns' School is the Loreto Convent at Darjeeling where Sri Aurobindo was a student from 1877 to 1879 before being sent to England by his father.

The Loreto Convent celebrated its 150th anniversary in 1996 and wanted to start the commemorative celebration by honouring its most distinguished alumnus—Sri Aurobindo. The Mother-Supreme Philomena and the Principal of the Loreto Convent wanted to have a photograph of Sri Aurobindo installed in the school as far back as 1973, when the sacred relics of Sri Aurobindo were brought to Darjeeling. The Mother-Supreme approached Dibyendu Goswami for a photograph of Sri Aurobindo.

On 12 August 1996, a photograph of Sri Aurobindo at the age of eleven, framed in gold and decorated with flowers and garlands, was placed in a compartment of the Darjeeling Mail. Members of Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir and other devotees offered bouquets and garlands before the train left Sealdah Station. In the early morning of August 13, the train arrived at New Jalpaiguri Station. The photograph was then accompanied by a large entourage to Siliguri Circuit House. From there it was taken in a car to Darjeeling. Today, the journey from Siliguri to Darjeeling by car hardly takes two and a half hours. 120 years ago, young Aurobindo made this journey by foot and horse. It then took a minimum of 15 days to cover the same distance!

Birendra Kumar Maitra, a minister in the West Bengal Government, Kamal Roychowdhury, a veteran freedom fighter, Dibyendu Goswami, organiser of the programme, and a large convoy escorted Sri Aurobindo's photograph to the Loreto Convent. Sri Aurobindo's photograph received a rousing reception.

The convoy was met by Mother Philomena and the teachers and students of Loreto Convent, as well as the guests who had gathered there to be a part of the ceremony. An elaborate cultural fête was conducted to celebrate the occasion. The students read quotations from Sri Aurobindo, recited 'Namaskar', a poem addressed to Sri Aurobindo by Rabindranath Tagore, performed classical and folk dances and also sang Nepali songs. Birendra Kumar Maitra and Dibyendu Goswami addressed the gathering.

The participation and sincerity of the students, teachers and staff of Loreto Convent were overwhelming. They welcomed their distinguished alumnus, Sri Aurobindo, with respect, honour and love.

DIBYENDU GOSWAMI

BEFORE THE GODS WERE BORN

THE Gods were a later creation. They were born at a much later stage in the process, much after the appearance of the occult Void. The Absolute emptied itself out and made room for Non-Being. It became inconscient. When the horror of inconscience was seen a ladder was built to reach it down from above. The Gods, yet remaining in contact with the creative Truth-Force, took upon themselves the cosmic load. The problem of Inconscience could be solved only by first establishing this hierarchy of planes and then working upward through evolution, so that the divine splendour may manifest in its manifold possibility with the consciousness of truth and light and bliss and power.

Across the advent of this divine splendour's manifestation stands the obstacle of the great Nothing in the nature of total insensibility, total unawareness, the Night. She has seen that the One who entered into her bosom is absorbed in a trance of utter forgetfulness. The sway is complete—even with a kind of hostility—and there is no door of escape cut out.

But a door has to be cut out. Her bosom has to become the womb. From it shall emerge the suns of such glory that they shall always shine in the Everlasting Day. Children of Immortality shall take birth to progressively and multifoldly grow in the Eternal.

Which precisely means that there has to be the climbing upward to the Above—not just to reach the starting Absolute and merge into it, but to turn the occasion of that enormous Night into a majesty of manifestation in the vastness of Light. In that way the Creator sees yet another aspect of his own infinity, holding in its triple splendour of Truth and Consciousness and inalienable Bliss an ever-widening creation.

The first step is the most difficult step and it has been taken—to create from itself a total Void. It emptied itself out into itself, it absented itself from its own Presence. A bottomless Abyss was formed. It fell into the swoon of entire disownment. And the miracle is, this very Abyss, the remarkable Void itself became a point of entry for Savitri, the divine creative Consciousness-Force, for stepping into the Felicity of the Everlasting Day. In the epic as given to us by Sri Aurobindo she found the Door of Access where Death stood transformed, guarding, as well as pouring, those excellences upon us.

But now there can be the wondrous joy of coming out of its withheld glory. The possibility of revealing the concealed potentialities is itself an arduous undertaking and it has to be worked out in another mood of delight. The first *asat* has to become the last *asat*. It saw its own shadow and it disappeared into it, the shadow that was thrown gleamingly farther away in the sequel of its own primal urge to move out. Here then is the birth of the first Avatar, the permanent Avatar, the Divine who accepts his station in the Inconscience. Here dwells, rather sleeps, the inconscient Vishnu of the Puranas. The couch for his sleep is the Serpent Ananta, the coiled-up Energy with a thousand

qualities wrapped up in the divinity of their dormancy That is how the mythical language describes the beginning of this multi-levelled Universe with seven upper and seven nether worlds, *lokas* There are beings and beings occupying all these worlds, with their powers and their urges to function in the manner of their own characteristic formations and their own expressive potentialities

Such was the *modus operandi* of starting the creation, indeed, if there was something like 'starting', then this was the beginning of the process Time existed not there, but now in a dynamism of its rush it is working itself out in timeless Eternity The dynamic Absolute is in action In it is the *vyapara*, the commerce or business of creation

The first plunge has yet to make a further advance Indeed, at this point, there is only the Nothing, the *avyakta*, the Non-manifest, has taken the first step towards another *avyakta*, the Unmanifest, as if of the opposite kind, which can give rise to the *vyakta*, the Manifest as it shall be But up to now it remains immobile and actionless The unfoldment of creation has still to work itself out It is that which justifies the Buddhist conception of the Void giving rise to these million shapes and forms, these countless teeming worlds

The Mother narrates, in the manner of a story, the process of creation She takes care to say that it is simply a way of seeing things and cannot be taken in the literal sense It helps, by re-living in it, to understand the how and why of all that is

When the Supreme decided to exteriorise Himself in order to be able to see Himself, the first thing in Himself which He exteriorised was the Knowledge of the world and the Power to create it This Knowledge-Consciousness and Force began its work, and in the supreme Will there was a plan, and the first principle of this plan was the expression, simultaneously, of the essential Joy and the essential Freedom, which seemed to be the most interesting feature of this creation

So intermediaries were needed to express this Joy and Freedom in forms. And at first four beings were at first emanated to start this universal development which was to be the progressive objectivisation of all that is potentially contained in the Supreme These Beings were, in the principle of their existence, Consciousness and Light, Life, Bliss and Love, and Truth

As soon as they set to work—they had their own conception of how it had to be done—being totally free, they chose to do it independently As soon as there was separation—for that is the essential cause, separation—as soon as there was separation—between the Supreme and what had been emanated, Consciousness changed into inconscience, Light into darkness, Love into hatred, Bliss into suffering, Life into death and Truth into falsehood And they proceeded with their creations independently, in separation and disorder

(*Questions and Answers*, 16 October 1957)

But then there were many successive involutions in Matter The Gods come much later

on the scene. The Mother speaks of the descent of the Divine Love into Matter because of which the evolutionary unfoldment in Matter has become a possibility.

Consciousness became inconscience, so total that no contact seemed possible between the Origin and what was created. And this total inconscience made a direct descent necessary, without passing through the intermediate regions, a direct descent of the divine Consciousness in its form of Love. And it is this descent of Divine Love into matter, penetrating it and adding a new element to its composition, which has made possible the ascent, slow for us, but an uninterrupted ascent, from inconscience to consciousness and from darkness to light.

(*Questions and Answers*, 31 October 1956)

We cannot say it is salvaging a situation that had arisen as if by a peculiar accident. If this entire happening was an accident it was, so to say, a willed accident, a fruitful accident to give rise to a creation, a creation emerging out of the Great Nothing, out of the Inconscience. What more wonderful a possibility could there have been! That is delight itself. And this delight worked itself out in full freedom and in the truth of its own joy. We may therefore call this creation *adbhuta*, marvellous, also that which cannot be derived from any more fundamental entity, which has no other elemental origin, which is *ādi bhuta*, nothing existed prior to it. It is only now that all these varying countless elements have started appearing. The possibility of the Infinite is now multiplying itself infinitely—to such an extent that even the very opposite of its truth is allowed in the process to have its sway. The Being of Falsehood and the Being of Death are the ones who dominate the present evolutionary scene. As long as these beings exist there will be, says the Mother, difficulties. That is the occult problem which has to be solved.

In this chain of happenings when did the material world arise? Subsequent to the appearance of Inconscience—there is a great gulf between Inconscience and Matter. Matter is already an advanced state, a wonderful formation coming out of the absented Consciousness. The Mother explains:

When, precisely, the Consciousness “began” its creation.. the first manifestation of the creative Consciousness was just an emanation of consciousness—of conscious light—and when this emanation separated itself from its origin, the Inconscient was born. Consequently, the birth of the Inconscient is prior to the formation of the world, and it was only when the perception came that the whole universe was going to be created uselessly that there was a call and Divine Love plunged into the Inconscient to change it into consciousness. Therefore, it can be said that the formation of the material worlds as we know them is the result of the descent of the supreme Consciousness into the Inconscient.

(*Questions and Answers*, 24 March 1951)

About the first separation and the appearance of the four opposite powers, we have a

very vivid description in *Savitri* It is the Sacrifice of the Purusha, the abandoning of the triple Splendour by the Supreme, that alone could dissolve the ignominy of the Nothingness, that alone could meet the opposition which arose out of the emanated powers' deliberate distancing of themselves from the Origin (*Savitri*, p 141)

In the enigma of the darkened Vasts
 God's force turned into a child's helplessness
 Can bring down heaven by their sacrifice
 A contradiction founds the base of life
 The eternal, the divine Reality
 Has faced itself with its own contraries,
 Being became the Void and Conscious-Force
 Nescience and walk of a blind Energy
 And Ecstasy took the figure of world-pain
 In a mysterious dispensation's law
 A Wisdom that prepares its far-off ends
 Planned so to start her slow aeonic game

“Which came first in the manifestation, the God or the Asura?”—that was the question put to the Mother She answered as follows

The oldest tradition says that the first four emanations of the Mahashakti—Consciousness, Love, Truth and Life—cut themselves off (separated themselves) from their Supreme Origin and became Unconsciousness, Suffering, Falsehood and Death. Then a second emanation was made to repair the damage. They are the Gods

(CWM, Vol 16, p 370)

Clearly, the four emanations spoken of in *Savitri* are the emanations of the Mahashakti and are not the direct powers and personalities coming from the Supreme Divine whose first emanation is the inconscient Void or the Nothingness “All was plunged in the negating Void”—that is the first movement and the emanations followed it The work of the Supreme is taken over by the Mahashakti Out of his sleep of trance he called out his mute Force, the great Power, *brahmaiva śakti*, the Executrix of the Worlds It is her work that we witness here

“Let me withdraw myself into myself”—that is the first urge of the Absolute towards manifestation. Because he has withdrawn, there is no activity, no sensation, no awareness In it nothing happens, nothing can happen This Non-Existence is the reality of that absoluteness itself, a kind of first Nothingness coming out of the last Nothingness It has its absolute omnipotence, a power resting in the full Void If this has now to become a basis for manifestation a second plunge is needed the Absolute has to send its creative Powers to base themselves in the Void They came in full

freedom and in the joy of separation from the Source itself. But in the process the Absolute as the Void overpowered them and deformed them totally, thus frustrating the first attempt. Yet by that very act something has happened to the Void and a possibility has opened out for several transformative descents. The four Asuric Beings are now standing as Guards at the Gate of the enormous Void, the Abyss of Inconscience. Sri Aurobindo explains.

The complete separation can take place only when the stage of Inconscience has been reached and our world of manifold Ignorance arises out of that tenebrous matrix. Existence plunging into an apparent Non-Existence, Consciousness into an apparent Inconscience, Delight of existence into a vast cosmic insensibility are the first result of the fall and, in the return from it by a struggling fragmentary experience, the rendering of Consciousness into the dual terms of truth and falsehood, knowledge and error, of Existence into the dual terms of life and death, of Delight of existence into the dual terms of pain and pleasure are the necessary process of the labour of self-discovery. A pure experience of Truth, Knowledge, Delight, Imperishable Existence would here be itself a contradiction of the truth of things. Still, because the Non-Existence is a concealed Existence, the Inconscience a concealed Consciousness, the insensibility a masked and dormant Ananda, these secret realities must emerge

(*The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol 18, pp 287-88)

Creation of the Void, plunge to form Inconscience, first Incarnation, permanent Avatar, great Separation of the Four Powers from the Origin because of the Joy and Freedom with which they moved out, setting up of the cosmic ladder to realise the possibility of a divine manifestation which is there – these are the broad steps in the sequence of this evolutionary creation. About this mysterious Void we may speak in the language of Nagarjuna as that which cannot be called void or not-void, or both, or neither, it is only to indicate it that we speak of it as the Void,—*śūnyam iti na vaktavyam aśūnyam iti va bhavet, ubhayam nobhayam ceti, prajñaptiyartham tu kathyate*

What is occult has to become spiritual. “The world is due to the will, *samkalpa*, of God,” says the traditional knowledge. By his own Will the Divine has taken, via the Void, the status of Inconscience. How does it happen? That will always remain a mystery. It could be the will to create, it could be inherently an aspect of joy; it could be the self-existent, it could be a movement of consciousness in its own awareness. It could be all these or else something altogether different. In fact there was nothing like a beginning, because there was no Time present then. However, as far as the individual is concerned, he advances in Time. He offers his progress to the Master of the Works. The spiritual path is the path of progress, of an evolutionary advance towards all-knowledge, towards the divine fulfilment in creation. That is what really matters to us—with the occult providing the necessary basis for action and growth. We should thus be chiefly concerned with the pragmatics. Sri Aurobindo explains

Only when we cross the border into a larger luminous consciousness and self-aware substance where divine Truth is a native and not a stranger, will there be revealed to us the Master of our existence in the imperishable integral truth of his being and his powers and his workings. Only there, will his works in us assume the flawless movement of his unfailing supramental purpose. But that is the end of a long and difficult journey, and the Master of works does not wait till then to meet the seeker on the path of Yoga and put his secret or half-shown Hand upon him and upon his inner life and actions. Already he was there in the world as the Originator and Receiver of works behind the dense veils of the Inconscient, disguised in force of Life, visible to the Mind through symbol godheads and figures. It may well be in these disguises that he first meets the soul destined to the way of the integral Yoga. Or even, wearing still vaguer masks, he may be conceived by us as an Ideal or mentalised as an abstract Power of Love, Good, Beauty or Knowledge; or, as we turn our feet towards the Way, he may come to us veiled as the call of Humanity or a Will in things that drives towards the deliverance of the world from the grasp of Darkness and Falsehood and Death and Suffering—the great quaternary of Ignorance. For the supramental Transcendence is not a thing absolutely apart and unconnected with our present existence. It is a greater Light out of which all this has come for the adventure of the Soul lapsing into the Inconscience and emerging out of it, and, while that adventure proceeds, it waits superconscient above our minds till it can become conscious in us. Hereafter it will unveil itself and by the unveiling reveal to us all the significance of our own being and our works; for it will disclose the Divine whose fuller manifestation in the world will release and accomplish that covert significance.

(*The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, Vol 20, pp 248-50)

The occult of the Divine plunge has now taken up the Avataric spiritual in the descending and ascending grades of manifestation. It shall then acquire in a multifold manner of the terrestrial scheme a fuller significance, the significance of Truth and Consciousness and Delight. Indeed, the Inconscience itself being infinite—for it is the Absolute who has become that—there is an infinity in this multifoldness emerging out of it. That is a marvel worthy of the Divine celebrating its happy surprise. The Gods are later participators in this surprise of the utter Inexpressible. But the reward is entirely the earth's,—or of the Divine himself. Do we not chant that glory in the creative Word of *Savitri* which also establishes what it chants? (*Savitri*, pp 710-11)

Often a lustrous inner dawn shall come
 Lighting the chambers of the slumbering mind;
 A sudden bliss shall run through every limb
 And Nature with a mightier Presence fill.
 Thus shall the earth open to divinity

And common natures feel the wide uplift,
Illumine common acts with the Spirit's ray
And meet the deity in common things
Nature shall live to manifest secret God,
The Spirit shall take up the human play,
This earthly life become the life divine

In this divine beatitude the Gods shall also participate if they wish so, by taking birth on this earth. A new day has dawned bringing with it the transformative wonder right here in the midst of this creation, a day that sets not but grows forever in its splendour. How marvellous indeed! Salutations to the earlier Gods!

R Y DESHPANDE

“SUNDERING OF THE HEART-STRINGS”

(Continued from the issue of October 1997)

PART IV

Heart-Strings in *Savitri*

THERE are four references to “Heart-Strings” in *Savitri* the first is in Book IV (The Book of Birth and Quest), Canto IV (The Quest), page 381. The evening before Savitri leaves on her quest, her father, Aswapati, tells her of her divine mission. From that time onwards Savitri becomes free from “accustomed scenes” and knows that the secrets of an unseen world are close. The next dawn she leaves the palace on her quest. Passing through towns and cities and fields she comes to spaces “not yet perturbed by human joys and fears” These are spaces where earth is fully alive and the wilderness and the very air full of peace and love The earth calls a select few to share in her peace and love and joy and it is here that our passage begins:

A few and fit inhabitants she called
To share the glad communion of her peace,
The breadth, the summit were their natural home.
The strong king-sages from their labour done,
Freed from the warrior tension of their task,
Came to her serene sessions in these wilds,
The strife was over, the respite lay in front
Happy they lived with birds and beasts and flowers
And sunlight and the rustle of the leaves.
And heard the wild winds wandering in the night,
Mused with the stars in their mute constant ranks,
And lodged in the mornings as in azure tents,
And with the glory of the noons were one.
Some deeper plunged; from life’s external clasp
Beckoned into a fiery privacy
In the soul’s unprofaned star-white recess
They sojourned with an ever-living Bliss:
A Voice profound in the ecstasy and the hush
They heard, beheld an all-revealing Light.
All time-made difference they overcame,
The world was fibred with their own heart-strings,
Close drawn to the heart that beats in every breast,
They reached the one self in all through boundless love
Attuned to Silence and to the world-rhyme,
They loosened the knot of the imprisoning mind

Here we meet those who have loosened the “Knot of Rudra” and their “heart-strings” are now the ones that fibre the whole world.

Amal Kiran comments on this passage.

I believe that what is suggested here is the Upanishadic Yoga. The Upanishadic Yoga seems to be a blend of Jnana (Knowledge) and Bhakti (Devotion). The aim is the reaching of ‘the one self in all’, which is what the traditional Yoga of Knowledge achieves by standing back from all mind-movements and realising the sheer witness self. In the Yoga of the Upanishads this self is an intense silence, within which ‘the world-rhyme’ is heard. The way to this double experience is through a deepening and widening of the heart consciousness. The popular belief is that the Upanishads form the foundation of Jnana Yoga. But their approach to Jnana is through what one may call ‘the heart of hearts’ where to know is to love.

2 The second reference is from Book VII (The Book of Yoga), Canto VI (Nirvana and the All-Negating Absolute). The poet in this passage describes what happens when the heart-strings are, as if, rent by absolute stillness (*italics mine*).

In that absolute stillness bare and formidable
 There was glimpsed an all-negating Void Supreme
 That claimed its mystic Nihil’s sovereign right
 To cancel Nature and deny the soul.
 Even the nude sense of self grew pale and thin.
 Impersonal, signless, featureless, void of forms
 A blank pure consciousness had replaced the mind
 Her spirit seemed the substance of a name,
 The world a pictured symbol drawn on self,
 A dream of images, a dream of sounds
 Built up the semblance of a universe
 Or lent to spirit the appearance of a world
 This was self-seeing, in that intolerant hush
 No notion and no concept could take shape,
 There was no sense to frame the figure of things,
 A sheer self-sight was there, no thought arose.
 Emotion slept deep down in the still heart
 Or lay buried in a cemetery of peace.
 All feelings seemed quiescent, calm or dead,
 As if the *heart-strings rent* could work no more
 And joy and grief could never rise again.

For the vibration of the heart-strings produces not only the joyous but also the melancholic music of life.

Such a state can be mimicked by a state of shock caused by an unbearable emotional upheaval, e.g. by a sudden financial crisis or the sudden death of a loved one. The whole external personality goes into extreme apathy because of the collapse of ordinary coping mechanisms. This is not a liberation but a collapse into nihil. However, if a sadhak facing such a circumstance appeals for the Divine’s help, his inner being may use it as an opportunity towards such a liberation as is described in this passage.

Amal Kiran explains this passage as follows.

Here the rending of the heart-strings leads to a liberation not within our world but clean out of it—perhaps a necessary or unavoidable step even in our yoga for a start.

3. The third reference describes a state where the heart-strings produce music but without the accompanying voice of the twins—joy and grief. The background here is a different state of consciousness similar to a dream state. Sometimes an aspirant may experience a similar state during the practice of dynamic *samata*, equanimity, in daily life.

This reference occurs in Book X (The Book of Double Twilight), Canto I (The Dream Twilight of the Ideal), page 605. I now quote this passage (*italics mine*)

All things in this fair realm were heavenly strange
 In a fleeting gladness of untired delight,
 In an insistency of magic change.
 Past vanishing hedges, hurrying hints of fields,
 Mid swift escaping lanes that fled her feet
 Journeying she wished no end: as one through clouds
 Travels upon a mountain ridge and hears
 Arising to him out of hidden depths
 Sound of invisible streams, she walked besieged
 By the illusion of a mystic space,
 A charm of bodiless touches felt and heard
 A sweetness as of voices high and dim
 Calling like travellers upon seeking winds
 Melodiously with an alluring cry.
 As if a music old yet ever new,
 Moving suggestions on her *heart-strings* dwelt,
 Thoughts that no habitation found, yet clung
 With passionate repetition to her mind,
 Desires that hurt not, happy only to live
 Always the same and always unfulfilled
 Sang in the breast like a celestial lyre
 Thus all could last yet nothing ever be.

Such a state of illusory happiness can indeed occur during sadhana in the process of going within and above. It is one of the 'wayside inns of ill-repute' where a sadhak can go astray, and hence to be recognised and overpassed. Amal Kiran explains this passage thus

Now the heart-strings give a response to fast vanishing objects and scenes and seem to belong to an illusory world which is a series of strange happinesses impossible to hold back, happinesses magical just because so evanescent. Surely such a state cannot be our goal. Our goal is an eternal Bliss which while being eternal is not a static blessedness but yields ever new intensities.

4. The fourth reference occurs at the beginning of Book IX (The Book of Eternal Night), Canto 1 (Towards the Black Void), page 573. Savitri is alone with the corpse of Satyavan. A change comes over her, a 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.
It shapes immutably its far-seen ends;
Untouched and tranquil amid error and tears
And measureless above our striving wills,
Its gaze controls the turbulent whirl of things
To mate with the Glory it sees, the spirit grows .

and finally

All in her mated with that mighty hour,
As if the last remnant had been slain by Death
Of the humanity that once was hers
Assuming a spiritual wide control,
Making life's sea a mirror of heaven's sky,
The young divinity in her earthly limbs
Filled with celestial strength her mortal part
Over was the haunted pain, the rending fear
Her grief had passed away, her mind was still,
Her heart beat quietly with a sovereign force

There came a freedom from the *heart-strings*' clutch,
Now all her acts sprang from the godhead's calm *(italics mine)*

Amal Kiran's comments on this passage are.

The Upanishadic suggestion of 'the rending of the heart-strings' is imaged in this passage. A freedom from the grip of the world is conjured up, leading to the immortal's status beyond the promptings of the ordinary human consciousness. We wake into the ever-unbound Divinity which is at the same time within us and above us.

I conclude this 4-part article on "Sundering of the Heart-Strings" with a passage from Sri Aurobindo explaining the parable of Shunahshepa wherein the same concept of sundering of strings that bind the human being to falsehood is explained

Ignorance [or falsehood in the being], this matrix of sin, has in its substantial effect the appearance of a triple cord of limited mind, inefficient life, obscure physical animality, the three ropes with which the Rishi Shunahshepa in the parable was bound as a victim to the sacrificial post. The whole result is a struggling or inert poverty of being, it is the meagreness of a mortal undelight and the insufficiency of a being that collapses at every moment towards death. When Varuna the Mighty comes and sunders this threefold restraint, we are freed towards riches and immortality. Uplifted, the real man arises to his true kingship in the undivided being. The upper cord flies upwards releasing the wings of the Soul into superconscious heights, the middle cord parts both ways and all ways, the constrained life breaking out into a happy breadth of existence, the lower cord collapses downwards taking with it the alloy of our physical being to disappear and be dissolved in the stuff of the Inconscient. This liberation is the purport of the parable of Shunahshepa and his two great hymns to Varuna

(SABCL, Volume 10, p 452)

(Concluded)

DINKAR D PALANDE

THE SUPRAMENTAL MANIFESTATION

(This is a text originally prepared for a slide show by Kailas Jhaveri to present the significance of the symbols of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in terms of the Integral Yoga through Flowers. It is based on their writings and includes direct quotes wherever possible. The spiritual names of the flowers are given here in italics.—Editor)

1. SRI AUROBINDO'S SYMBOL

IN the symbol of Sri Aurobindo the descending triangle represents *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. This supremely conscious and blissful Being is willingly involved into its extreme opposite, Nescience, and secretly presides over its evolution.

Sat

Psychic Power in Existence is the flower chosen by the Mother to represent Sat, the eternal, infinite, conscious Existence. It is the active force of conscious Being which realises itself in all the marvellous variations of its existence through its *psychic power*.

The *psychic centre* is behind the heart and it is through the purified emotions that the psychic most easily finds an outlet. The *psychic power* organises the activities of the nature to make us progress by bringing the psychic forward and by opening the mind, the vital and the physical, to receive the *Light* of the higher consciousness.

This Light can only be received by a complete *silence* of the being—the silence in which all is quiet and one remains as a witness while something in the consciousness spontaneously calls down the force of the higher consciousness upon mind, life and body. In silence, we feel the eternal *Divine Presence* of a supreme Master, Friend, Lover, Teacher.

Chit or Consciousness-Force

The Mother chose the flower *Supramental Consciousness* to represent Chit or Consciousness-force—a consciousness which is gloriously awake and powerful, luminous, sure of itself and infallible in its movements. Each of its steps is dictated by an innate spiritual vision, a comprehensive and exact penetration into the truth of all and the truth of each thing.

Here, knowledge, will and power are not separate, but one and united. It has not only the knowledge of what is to be willed, but also the *supramental power* to effectuate its knowledge. The whole radical change in the evolution from a basis of Ignorance to a basis of *Knowledge* can only come by the intervention of the *effective power of the supramental consciousness* and its direct action—*Supramental action*—in earth-existence.

Bliss or Ananda

The flower chosen by the Mother to represent *Ananda* is calm, tranquil, equipped,

smiling and very gentle in its truly simple austerity. Another plane of Ananda is *Krishna's Ananda*. Krishna is the Anandamaya Purusha; he supports the evolution through the Overmind, leading it towards the *Divine Ananda*, which is our source. For, from the Divine Bliss, the original Delight of Existence, the Lord of Immortality comes pouring the wine of that Bliss, the mystic 'Soma', into these jars of mentalised living Matter; eternal and beautiful he enters into these sheaths of substance—physical, vital, mental—for the integral *transformation* of the being and the nature

Sri Aurobindo, realising this Supramental Consciousness, its power and Bliss in himself, has fixed it in the earth-consciousness and given us the path of the integral Yoga to attain it. This is a perfect path of Truth, lit by the *Supramental Sun* for our journey to the other shore beyond the darkness, ever beckoning us with its irresistible call:

O Truth-Conscious, be conscious of the Truth
Cleave out many streams of the Truth.

The ascending triangle of Sri Aurobindo's symbol represents the aspiring answer from Matter under the form of life, light and love. Let us see in terms of the Integral Yoga what this *triple aspiration* necessitates as a personal effort from us.

Life

The flower chosen by the Mother to represent Life is *power of consciousness*. It is the power of controlling and dominating the lower movements of inconscient Matter

As the spokes of a wheel in its nave, so in the *life-energy* is all established—the triple knowledge and the sacrifice and the power of the strong and the purity of the wise. Under the control of the life-energy is all established in the triple heavens.

The true life-force reveals itself as no longer this troubled, harassed, divided, striving surface energy, but it is a *purified life-energy*, which is a great and radiant divine power, full of *peace* and strength and Bliss. Our aim, therefore, must be the purification of these energies, their *transformation*, control and utilisation—*Supramental life-energy*.

The proper function of the *life-energy* is to be always *turned towards the Divine* and to do what is bidden by the divine principle in us, to reach to and to enjoy what is given to it by that indwelling Divine and not to desire at all. In order to realise this there must be a renunciation of attachment and the craving of desire—*integral renunciation of desire*—in the senses and the heart, of self-will in the thought and action, and of egoism in the centre of the consciousness—*abolition of the ego*.

Sri Aurobindo tells us in no uncertain terms: "Whoever clings to the desires and weaknesses of the flesh, the cravings and passions of the vital in its turbulent ignorance, the dictates of his personal mind, unsilenced and unillumined by a greater knowledge, cannot find a true inner law and is heaping obstacles in the Divine fulfilment." There must be, therefore, a total *absence of desire*.

We must *live only for the Divine* and realise that intense joy of existing only by the

Divine and for the Divine and the feeling that without Him nothing exists, that life has no longer any meaning, nothing has any purpose, nothing has any value, nothing has any interest unless it is this call, this aspiration, this opening to the supreme Truth, to all that we call the Divine.

In other words, we must aspire for a *conversion of the aim of life from the ego to the Divine*. Our instrumental being must convert itself into a receptacle of *Divine Knowledge*, an instrument of Divine will-power—*will one with the Divine Will*—and force of being, a channel of Divine love, joy and beauty, the realisation of the *Godhead* seated within.

Light

This Light is the *light of the Divine Consciousness*. The aim of this Yoga is first to come into contact with this consciousness and then to live in its light and allow the light to transform the whole nature so that the whole being may live in union with the Divine and the nature become a field of action of the *Divine Knowledge*, the Divine Power and the *Divine Ananda*.

It is a *light without obscurity* which can only be seen and grasped when we have reached the summits of mental being, entered into Overmind and stood on the borders of an upper, a greater hemisphere of spiritual existence where in the light of the *Supramental Consciousness* the ignorance and the inconscience cease altogether. That means the *intensity of consciousness in the full Supramental Light* to transform our being. For, even the enlightened spiritual mind can be defective in its greater power and knowledge and still be subject to a partial and local obscuration or a limitation by the original Nescience.

Our *consciousness*, therefore, must be *one with the Divine Consciousness* without any shadows, delivered from inconscience and ignorance, aware of its own truths and powers, determining freely its manifestations in a movement always concurrent and in tune in every detail with its supreme and universal reality.

Let us then have the *joy of union with the Divine*. For, it is impossible to change the human nature into the divine or to make an instrument of divine knowledge, will and joy of existence, unless there is a union with the supreme Being, Consciousness and Bliss and unity with its universal Self in all things and beings—*intimacy with the universal Nature*.

Love

The *Divine Love* never fails us. But our capacity to receive it increases in proportion to the love we offer to the Divine. This is our *communion with the Divine* through love. Let us therefore have *love for the Divine in all humility*.

Now, it is imperative for the mind to understand that it is only an instrument and not the master. *Mind* must be, therefore, *surrendered to the Divine in its love*. Our *human passions* must be *changed into love for the Divine*. This means that each movement of love, spiritualised, must no longer depend on mental preference, vital passion or physical craving.

Love must be restored to its fundamental spiritual and psychic essence. Let this *psychic love for the Divine* be the spur and goal of our being, its élan of truth. And there must be a *balance of the nature* in our *love for the Divine*—love that is passive and active, calm and ardent, sweet and strong, silent and expressive,—a *flaming love for the Divine*, ready for all heroism and sacrifice

There must be an *integral love for the Divine* in all the parts of our being—a love that is pure, complete, and irrevocable and gives itself forever. Also, this love must be a flowering of joy and union, pure and confident in its self-giving which is a state obtained by a *loving surrender to the Divine*—an inner *offering* of the heart's *adoration*. This is the intensest way of purification.

However, it is the power of love supramentalised that alone can take hold of all living relations without hesitation or danger and turn them Godwards, delivered from their crude, mixed and petty human settings and sublimated into the happy material of a divine life. It is this *beauty of supramental love* that we must realise in ourselves. For, *beauty offering itself in service for the Divine* is an incomparable splendour.

Above all, we must realise in ourself *Radha's Consciousness*. Radha is a personification of the absolute love for the Divine, total and integral in all parts of the being from the highest spiritual to the physical, bringing the absolute self-giving in total consecration of the whole being—*entire self-giving*—and calling down into the body and the most material nature, the supreme Consciousness-Force and Ananda—*Sat-Chit-Ananda*.

The Square

The junction of the triangles, that is the central square, is the perfect manifestation—the *Supramental Manifestation* with its effective power of *Supramental Action*. The supramental or the gnostic life will exist and act for the Divine in itself and in the world, for the divine in all. The increasing possession of the individual being and the world by the Divine Presence, Life, Power, Love, Delight, Beauty will be the sense of life to the gnostic being. It will be a manifest expression of the *Divine Love governing the world*.

However, *the beginning of the Supramental Realisation* will demand a wide calm and deep delight of all existence as its first steps of self-realisation.

At the centre of the symbol is the pink lotus, *the Avatar—the Supreme manifest upon earth in a body*, who makes the realisation of the Supramental Manifestation possible for the *multiplicity*, the creation. *Water* is the symbol of creation, which when supramentalised, will exist only for the divine manifestation in all its glory—*Supramental Manifestation*. The seven ripples of water represent the seven planes of Consciousness—three of the lower hemisphere, comprised of body, life and mind and three of the upper or higher hemisphere, representing Sat-Chit-Ananda, both linked by the *Supramental Consciousness*.

(To be concluded)

BELOVED, HAVING TASTED...

BELOVED, having tasted
The bitter cup of earth
I come to Thee, a lover
Of heaven, and discover
That naught was ever wasted
That I have done since birth
So fully having tasted
The bitter cup of earth!

The magic cup of pleasure
Pain-flooded to the brim,—
For years I drained cup after
Strange cup of tears and laughter,
And now I come to measure
The golden wine of Him,
Who drank the cup of pleasure
Rain-flooded to the brim

Through anguish and disaster
Arrives this lonely soul:
Along the way I scattered
My life that hardly mattered,
But now I am a master
Of perfect self-control.
Through anguish and disaster
Arrives my lonely soul.

How often torn and tortured
Yea, at the very root,
My life which growing duller
Each day, was losing colour!
But now it is an orchard
Of ripe and silent fruit!
The life which once was tortured
And wounded at the root!

Only Thy Love could pardon
My ways that might have placed
My soul beyond redemption
Without Its great Exemption.

Behold! A budded garden
Where once there was a waste!
Only Thy Love could pardon,
Thy Love so wondrous-chaste!

The past has been a very
Desert of suffering
Where all was dull and dreary
And all was bare and weary,
But now I am as merry
As any bird in Spring!
The past has been a very
Desert of suffering!

Yet was I no exception
To life, nor something strange,—
Since dark is mortal living,
Until Thy great forgiving,
And Thy divine reception
Works the miraculous change,
Lo, I was no exception
To life, nor something strange!

For life is full of rancour,
Falsehood and greed and guile
While it is lived without Thee,
Where mortals mock and flout Thee,
Yea, and a poison-canker
Dwells in each human smile!
For life is full of rancour
And bitterness and guile.

In what a subtle manner
The devil sets the snare
To draw and to inveigle
The soul's time-shadowed eagle,
Making each life a banner
For hostile powers to bear,
In what a subtle manner
The devil sets his snare!

With what a gaudy glamour
 Time in the world goes by!
 How sorrowfully hollow
 The life which mortals follow,
 In love with clash and clamour,
 In love with moan and cry!
 With what a gaudy glamour
 Time in the world goes by!

The soul goes wildly reeling,
 How like a drunken thing!
 How like a bird forgetting
 That days are swiftly setting,
 Wounded, yet scarcely feeling
 The wound upon its wings:
 The soul goes wildly reeling
 How like a drunken thing!

How sad, and yet amusing,
 Withal, how blind and vain,
 It seems when any brother
 Once having found the Mother
 Forgets Her, and goes choosing
 The death of life again!
 How sad and yet amusing,
 How imbecile and vain!

Choosing it, and exulting
 In coloured dreams of dust,
 When once Thy Love has won us!
 And calmy rebegun us!
 Say, is it not insulting
 To Thee and to Thy Trust,—
 This treacherous exulting
 In coloured dreams of dust?

Lo, Thou hast oped Thy portal
 Of splendours crystalline:
 And he who fain would enter
 Must dwell in the heart's centre,

And he who would grow immortal
 Must be entirely Thine.
 Lo, Thou hast oped the portal
 Of splendours crystalline.

On earth the shadows revel,
 Thy Glory shines above!
 Who wants the Light must surely
 Hold on to it securely,—
 One cannot serve the devil
 And yet demand Thy Love,—
 On earth the shadows revel,
 Thy Glory shines above!

When once the word is spoken
 And once the vow is made,
 It must be kept and treasured
 And by a lifetime measured,
 For once that word is broken
 Thy Promise is delayed.—
 And once the word is spoken
 Thy laws must be obeyed.

Beloved, I have taken
 An oath to be Thine own,—
 O let me be one living
 Expression of Thy giving!
 Within me rouse and waken
 Thy melodies alone.
 Beloved, I have taken
 An oath to be Thine own

Nay, I will never hurt Thee
 Nor Thy sweet Light resist!
 Upon Thy guidance leaning
 My life assumes a meaning,
 Ah Love, should I desert Thee
 I could no more exist.
 Nay, I will never hurt Thee
 Nor Thy sweet Light resist.

YAJNA

(A Poem in Greek Logaoedics Metre)

. RISHIS ranging in the expansive nature the fire gives for sun-horns,
Full sacrifice to the gravid return baring heaven's face inclusive,
Find more than thought would arrange and insist firmly set, bound and world-law,
Grounding themselves that the ultimate ground's plastic truth take the venture

Fathers laboured, now a memory, dim, still impelling the hero,
Old conquest yet an inviolate trace quickening souls and haunting,
Driving for growth, as the full ladles pour, land of free scope the thriving,
Giver given and the all-moving light solid, cresting in time's forms.

Burning, tawny, the immaculate Drop purifying, the mountain's
Lord and self-charge in the ascendant burst lives of calm-fed Agastya,
Dawn his long tread over the bending peaks that the sun mount securely,
Southward, settling on the brooding great sea's edge, to labour divinely

One beside him to the full conscious force strove that love holds in beauty,
Granting only as the instrument stands firm and plastic, without fear:
Lopamudra, of all lingering dust cleansed that films eyes of service,
Dug for knowledge, of the adamant dark pressed elixir immortal

Grudging, binding, all the incontinent rock held, the vajra-edge faltered,
Years on years bore on the strong shoulders, breath flagged, the set ranks too massive,
Still the old lines of thin grasp and decay made life and effort external,
Grubs of the crust inadequate to the true core released of the dragon

Now the time dawns in the energy's fund burns the pure strength of purpose,
In the clear face of the all-present god Oneness takes forms without end,
Finishing well, of the intimate fullness the red-gold exchange true,
Creative light of the won depths at last works the whole transformation.

JESSE ROARKE

BURNT OFFERING

LORD Agni, embrace me, burn the
impurities of my mind's ignorant ways
Away with my body's insatiable demands
Free me, O free me, from unwanted thoughts
that hover about the sphere seeking entry to catch me unaware.
You, I implore, be my ally, be my guide;
nothing shall bar my upward flight.
If ashes need to fly, let them!
I am more than my body, this you know—
divinity rests in my bosom waiting to rise
Lord Agni, reveal to me your smiling
grandiosity! Culminate the Yajna,
This last austerity—gods in heaven will
receive me from your pure embrace

GEORGETTE COTY

BEACHCOMBING

PATROLLING the tide-line
We scan the sea-wrack
Searching amongst this flotsam and jetsam
Dunnage and garbage
For some sign
Washed in, like us, by the waves:
Beachcombing for a message from the gods.

These scraps of plastic and metal
Do not satisfy us
Nor these shells,
Blobs of sponge,
Blips of kelp,
Not this miraculous artefact—
a cylindrical vessel
light, silvery, surprisingly strong,
decorated outside in black and green
and inscribed in two alphabets—
We kick it aside with a clatter
Wishing its message had been heeded.
“Keep the land clean—do not litter.”
Though this battered crate

Is clearly branded “ΠΟΣΕΙΔΟΝ”*
This is not the sign we seek

SHRADDHAVAN

* Poseidon

ERRATUM Please read “Shraddhavan” in place of “Shraddha” appearing on p 796 of the October 1997 issue of *Mother India*. The slip is regretted —Editor

SHATTERED COCOON

A SEVERE touch of your
Ruthless crushing hammer,
Has put a break
In my perpetual bondage
To the enamoured circular trip
Within a measured periphery
Fear was there and no resolution
Within the suffocating cocoon,
Inertia was the binding force
Thus, venturing not to tread
Beyond the tested road,
I remained attached
To the warmth of self-complacency.

Now this sudden blow. .
Almost uncompassionate and compelling
And intervening like my father
To stop my truancy in childhood.

I stand bewildered
Yet find the gateway flung open
To a sunlit path.. .

SITANGSHU CHAKRABORTY

THE FIRST STEP OF JANAKA

WHY passions high?
Why desert the world?
Isn't it sheer madness?

Run not away Understand.

Should you not have a level head?
Should you not be at peace within?

Honour the present but be free
From the shackles of the past and future

You're never doer nor even gainer,
You're always an objective observer

Like a lotus in a pond
 Be in the world
 But be not with it.

You've already renounced the world,
 For renunciation is the detached,
 The dispassionate state of the mind
 That's the first step of Janaka you have taken

M V ATRE

I AM INDIA

I AM India, the World Mother.
 But the world had me in chains
 I can feel them—now clinking apart
 It is time to be relieved of the pain
 I can feel the Cosmic Breeze—
 the promise of fresh air again

I can feel you, my children,
 rising from the dust:
 You are reaching your core—
 you have broken through your crust
 You have sought and found the transcendental lights
 You are carrying me onto my greatest heights

I am your ocean, my infinite children—
 Come, feel me in every part of your Infinity
 In every cell, in every conscious act
 The poise of perfection, inner freedom and true dignity

Feel your core, recognise your roots
 Realize, materialize your Indian-ness
 Therein you'll find the truth you seek
 Your World-ness Your Universe Your true grandeur

You are the deciders of today and tomorrow
 Rearing to show the evolutionary way
 I see you on your way alight, aflight
 I, Mother India, am so happy today!

SHRUTI

DR. V. MADHUSUDAN REDDY: A PERSONAL NOTE

WE have a certain debt to pay to our late uncle Dr V Madhusudan Reddy. But this debt cannot be paid back in money. It can only be repaid in words of gratefulness for what he did for us. You might be wondering what he did which was so special to us that it deserves such public attention. Well, he sent us to Sri Aurobindo Ashram for our education and oriented our lives towards Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He breathed intellectuality into all of us, not the dry metaphysics of the academic sort, but that inspired by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's thought, work and action. The intellectual atmosphere with which he charged us made us all take to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's ideals as naturally as fish take to water. As a matter of fact, we sometimes got overdoses of it and some of us balked at it. But now that he is no more, we realise the value of the heritage that he passed on to us. We haven't become great scholars or eminent writers but we have been left with the irrevocable conviction that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have come on the earth to stay even though they are not physically present anymore, that the new world is going to manifest one day and that, sooner or later, we shall all be faced with the necessity to change ourselves and grow into the new consciousness which is trying to descend on earth. For, Madhusudan Reddy repeated this all his life to others, like an evangelist. That was the import behind his conference on "The Next Millennium" or "The University of Tomorrow" or the aspiration behind the Matridarshan and Aurodarshan projects in Jangaon and Medhak. For those who don't know, these were meant to be like Auroville with perhaps a greater stress on education and research. Many unsympathetic people said they were totally crazy. Others criticised the impracticality of such projects. Even I was surprised at the fact that he wanted to construct first the Soul of Matridarshan in Jangaon, that is, the Meditation Hall of the Matridarshan project, which itself was to cost more than a crore of rupees. When I suggested that he should rather build a school first so that he could get at least some money for his project, he said he didn't want to do it the old way. He had done that in Hyderabad and he didn't want to repeat the same thing in Jangaon. "What about the people to come and stay at Matridarshan?" I asked him. Without a moment's hesitation he said, "Higher beings will descend on earth. They will come and stay here. This is for the next millennium. I am only starting the work in my own humble way!" Remembering his answer now, I am moved by his invincible faith in the future. Where can we get a man now, in this drab commercial world, with such courage of his convictions? Even if one does not believe in what he stood for, one must appreciate his courage and his capacity to dream, for, after all, today's dreams are tomorrow's realities!

A book has been recently published where he recounts his contact with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It was written by him during his last days and it throws light on his inner personality. One thing which many of us do not know is that the Mother, when She was physically present, used many people as instruments for her work in the world. She worked through them in various walks of life, as diverse as art, business,

music, politics, Ayurvedic medicine and even steel factories. The purpose was to establish spirituality in those fields. Dr Madhusudan Reddy, we should be proud to say, had the occasion to be one such instrument of the Mother, in the field of intellectual thought I don't want to use the words Higher or University Education, because he was chosen by the Mother to precisely fight the conventional academic education that most colleges offer to their pupils. Fired by Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine* in his young days, he landed in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram at the feet of the Mother. It opened in him vistas of new consciousness and new thought. His doctoral thesis was, consequently, on Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy of Evolution. After that he constantly endeavoured to reinterpret everything in the light of the Master's vision. He then started the Institute of Human Study, the name was approved by the Mother herself. Dr. Narayan Karan Reddy, another uncle of mine, remembers with what gusto they framed courses on Sri Aurobindo. Many University professors volunteered to teach free, a number of enthusiastic students enrolled themselves and the first batch of students was given certificates by the Mother herself!

Before proceeding further let me first ask a crucial question. Is Sri Aurobindo at all relevant to all of us? To people who are not practising Yoga? Most people would say that Yoga is okay for the spiritually inclined, but it is not useful for facing the battle of life. The general notion is that spirituality is a pastime which can be indulged in only after one has fulfilled one's worldly duties! This is precisely what Sri Aurobindo came to deny and dismiss. Yoga and life are not only compatible but "All life is Yoga," asserts he in *The Synthesis of Yoga*. All of us are doing Yoga whether we like it or not, because that is the great motive and purpose of existence. The only difference is that the spiritual man does it consciously, while most of us do it unconsciously or half-consciously. This does not mean that whatever we are doing is right, we mostly advance through repeated errors. It only means that the goal is the same for all, that of the eventual divinisation of life. There is an in-built mechanism in nature which drives man towards the Divine, even if he flees from the Divine. Yoga is the very foundation of life in all its aspects, from the most material to the most spiritual. This is how Sri Aurobindo explains the process of human evolution. Sri Aurobindo thus shed new light on every aspect of life and wrote books not only on Yoga but on Philosophy, Social Science, Politics, Poetry and Indian Culture, all from a spiritual point of view. This has necessitated an immense reorganisation of present thought, a recasting of present knowledge in the light of Sri Aurobindo's world-view. Dr Madhusudan Reddy did precisely this job all his life. As one inspired, he went abroad ten times to spread the message of the Master. He authored twenty books on various topics and was in India one of the most eloquent exponents of Sri Aurobindo.

His speeches were not confined to a fixed lecture-hour or to the allotted time of the speech. He would continue speaking as long as there was somebody listening, be it one or many, young or old, on the road or in the drawing-room. He was what I would call a twenty-four-hour non-stop speaker. Mention the Master and there would gush an endless flow of words, explaining, interpreting, praising Sri Aurobindo's vision of the

future and condemning current notions. It seems he once sat for eight hours explaining Sri Aurobindo to a group of Communists. I have been told that, in the U S A., four to five hours was a normal duration of the session whenever he went there to teach. I have personally met many Americans who remember him with great fondness as the one who had turned them towards the Divine. I recount here one incident which perhaps throws light on this very special capacity of his. It seems one evening he started talking in front of a tea-shop in Hyderabad. Hours passed by and the tea-shop closed down for the night. When the owner of the tea-shop opened his shop the next day, Uncle was still speaking with a lone listener in front of him!

I come now to the last stages of his life when he became a dedicated worker. He devoted a lot of his precious time to mundane work at the Institute or to attend to construction at Jangaon. I was myself ruffled when he once left me abruptly, in the middle of a very interesting interview, to receive a lorry load of cement bags. The next time it was a carpenter, and so on, every holiday I went there, driving me literally to exasperation. Here I was, having taken an appointment from him, waiting to hear the opinion of one of the most well-read Aurobindonians in the country and he hardly considered it important! Now as I think back, it does not at all seem to be strange. One who reads Sri Aurobindo profoundly can never stop at mere intellectual expression. He proceeds to the next stage of experience and practice. This stage had dawned in his last years when he became a meticulous worker, offering consciously all his work to the Divine Mother. As there is no greater or lesser work in the eyes of the Divine, he gave all an equal importance. So he took as much interest in designing furniture for the school as in planning for Matridarshan in Jangaon. At the same time he did justice to his intellectual faculties. It was during this period that he also wrote his *magnum opus*, the trilogy called *The Vedic Epiphany*. Veda was by far his favourite subject. This trilogy is an effort to clarify the arcane and symbolic content of the Vedas in the light of Sri Aurobindo. The academic world, I suppose, will take some time to accept his contribution to Indian thought.

Lastly, a thought on the present situation in Hyderabad, regarding the Institute of Human Study which has lost its dynamic founder. What is now going to happen to the projects he started in Jangaon and Medhak, the projects which he himself said are for the next millennium? My purpose is not to exhort the present management to complete these projects because I know too well the difficulties behind such schemes. I only intend to ward off unnecessary pessimism about them. More than ever before, I think, it is now that such centres are needed which take a bold leap into the future. Not only India but the whole world needs such attempts! It is in this respect that we would miss men like Dr. Madhusudan Reddy who could see far beyond the present turmoil and build for the next millennium!

RAMAN

[The Institute of Human Study at Hyderabad had organised a seminar on 25 July 1997 in memory of the late Prof. Madhusudan Reddy who was the founder of the Institute. The present article is an adaptation of the speech given there by the author.—Editor]

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of September 1997)

SRI AUROBINDO tells us that the Kena Upanishad is masterly in its analysis and his commentary explicates the many subtle verities that are implicit in its cryptic verses. The Kena is longer than the Isha and is cast in a dramatic mould. In the opening verse the Upanishad starts with a string of questions:

“By whom missioned falls the mind shot to its mark? By whom yoked moves the first life-breath forward on its paths? By whom impelled is this word that men speak? What God set eye and ear to their workings?”¹

“As the Isha closes with the aspiration towards the supreme felicity, so the Kena closes with the definition of Brahman as the Delight and the injunction to worship and seek after That as the Delight.

“For the precise subject of the two Upanishads is not identical. The Isha is concerned with the whole problem of the world and life and works and the human destiny in their relation to the supreme truth of the Brahman. ..

“The Kena Upanishad approaches a more restricted problem, starts with a more precise and narrow inquiry. It concerns itself only with the relation of mind-consciousness to Brahman-consciousness and does not stray outside the strict boundaries of its subject.”²

T. V. Kapali Sastri has given an illumined exposition of the Upanishads. It is based on the commentaries of Sri Aurobindo. He says.

“The sages of the Upanishads have certainly drawn their inspiration and succour from the fountain-springs of the Veda while engaged in developing their self-culture for the realisation of the ultimate Truth, for conforming their lives to the laws of the Spirit, for attainment of Brahmanhood here while living on Earth. The findings of their explorations in the realm of the Spirit and in the field of the inner life—the occult and spiritual gain—are often implicitly, yet in authentic tones expressed in a language that is more intelligible to the mentality of our age and fairly far removed from that of the hymns of the Rīg Veda. But they are, in the words of the Master. ‘The creation of a revelatory and intuitive mind and its illumined experience . Nor are they a revolutionary departure from the Vedic mind and its temperament. .and to a certain extent an enlarging transformation in the sense of bringing out into open expression all that was held covered in the symbolic Vedic speech as a mystery and a secret.’

“This background settled, the Upanishads reveal themselves as vehicles of illumination to the seeker who had, broadly speaking, a processed understanding of the general spirit of the Vedic and Vedantic sages and even some personal experience of the truths which are the bases of their structure. Hence, they are appropriately styled ‘Manuals of Sadhana’ in which the ideas are implicit, rarely explicit. .. The seeker, the hearer, was expected to proceed from knowledge to knowledge, verifying by experience, and confirming his intuitions or thought-visions of the truths and not treating his

ideas to the light of the logical reason and submitting to intellectual judgement.

“This commentary on the Kena Upanishad, then, takes up the ideas, elucidates them in their completeness, draws attention to the suggestions and thus brings to light the reasoning that is always implicit. The subject matter of the Upanishad, as indeed of the Upanishads in general, is Brahma Vidyā, the knowledge of Brahman. But they vary in their standpoints, start from different positions, proceed along the lines chosen to lead to the object of their seeking, the winning of an immortal state, the arrival at the undying light, the attainment of the supreme purpose of life, the Eternal. But this text, unlike the Isha Upanishad which concerns itself with the whole problem of world and life and knowledge and works and all the fundamental problems of Existence, confines itself to a restricted question, a limited and narrow but precise enquiry, not straying outside the limits of the problem it has set before itself. The problem of the world-existence is not taken into consideration at all; the material world and the physical life are taken for granted, and it straightly puts the questions: What is the mental life that uses the senses? What are these mental instruments? Are they the supreme and final power, the last witnesses or is there anything superior to them and more real and abiding that directs the activities of the eye and ear and speech and life-breath and mind itself? The Upanishad gives the answer in the affirmative. We must note here that this Upanishad like other earlier texts keeps close to the Vedic roots, reflects the ancient psychological system of the Vedic sages and ‘preserves what may be called their spiritual pragmatism’. This is quite apparent in the very opening sentence: ‘*Kenē-sitam*,—by whom missioned?’ ‘*Kena yuktām*—by whom yoked?’ The Upanishad proceeds to expound the relation of the Mind Consciousness to the Brahman Consciousness by which, it says, the mind thinks, the eye sees, the ear hears, the voice speaks, the life breathes, but which none of these can reach or touch. Thus it indicates and describes what cannot be expressed or actually described by the mind. It affirms and indicates that Brahman is the absolute of all our relatives from which all relatives derive their values and thus in a way it is knowable, and yet not utterly knowable, for it is at the same time the Absolute Beyond which is utterly unknowable.’”

Sri Aurobindo begins his commentary on the Kena Upanishad:

“The question is *Kena*, by whom or what? In the ancient conception of the Universe our material existence is formed from the five elemental states of Matter, the ethereal, aerial, fiery, liquid and solid, everything that has to do with our material existence is called the elemental *adhibhuta*. .

“The Upanishad is not concerned with the elemental, the *adhibhuta*, it is concerned with the relation between the subtle existence and the spiritual, the *adhi-daiva* and *adhyātma*. But the Mind, the Life, the speech, the senses are governed by cosmic powers, by Gods, by Indra, Vayu, Agni. Are these subtle cosmic powers the beginning of existence, the true movers of mind and life, or is there some superior unifying force, one in itself behind them all?”

“By whom or what is the mind missioned and sent on its errand so that it falls on its object like an arrow shot by a skilful archer at its predetermined mark, like a

messenger, an envoy sent by his master to a fixed place for a fixed object? What is it within us or without us that sends forth the mind on its errand? What guides it to its object?..

“Who then has yoked this Life-force to the many workings of existence or by what power superior to itself does it move forward in its paths? For it is not primal, self-existent or its own agent. We are conscious of a power behind which guides, drives, controls, uses it”⁴

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

References

- 1 *The Upanishads*, SABCL, Vol 12, p 146
- 2 *Ibid*, pp 155, 156
- 3 T V Kapali Shastry, *Book of Lights—1*, Collected Works, Volume One, pp 276-278
- 4 *The Upanishads*, SABCL, Vol 12 pp 158-160

THE SUN TEMPLE AT KONARAK—ASTROLOGICAL AND COSMOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

(Continued from the issue of October 1997)

Some Issues of Iconography

CERTAIN features of the architecture and sculpture of this temple arrest the eye by their extraordinariness. The foremost of these, undoubtedly, is the enormity of scale of the temple. The *jagamohan*, which is the only structure here that stands complete, measures in height 120 feet. One can only surmise the height of the ruined *deul* when it stood at its full, but Abul Faz'l gave it in his description as 225 feet. If this was the case, this might well have been the tallest temple built in India,—the *shikhara* of the Rajarajeshwara temple in Tanjore which stands intact to this day being 210 feet. The question that arises here is, was this only a highly ambitious project of a highly ambitious king, or did some other considerations go into the choice of such a massive scale for the temple? The next extraordinary feature is the profusion and fineness of the carvings. Debala Mitra comments that the artisans here ‘‘built like Titans and finished like jewellers’’,²² and one could not agree with her more. Of course, the Orissa style of temple sculpture is characterized by this feature of packing the wall surfaces with carving, but partly due to the size of this temple, partly due to the delicacy and variation of sizes of the sculpture and finally, due to the variety of the sculptured themes, the carved finish of the temple surface makes one dizzy. And yet the total unity of design is overwhelming, all the mass of detail composing the teeming universal body of the chariot of the Sun, progressing through space on its twelve wheels, pulled by seven horses. The third outstanding feature that cannot fail to catch the eye is the number and variety of erotic themes that are depicted in the sculpture. Again, the erotic sculpture, it may be argued, is a common feature of most later Orissan temple art, but perhaps nowhere is there a greater number of them. And the final outstanding feature here is the large number of secular sculptures, depicting the king and the many facets of the royal life, trivial and great, in war and in peace, within the palace and outside, temporal and spiritual.²³

There is much variation in the quality of the sculpture. This, one may say, is to be expected, since a large number of artisans of uneven capacity were employed in the execution. However, as verified by manuscript accounts, the finest artists were selected to work on important themes, and one of these, executed with the greatest attention to detail and expression, is the panel meant for the architrave of the eastern door to the *jagamohan*, featuring the nine planets (*navagrahas*). Though *navagrahas* are frequently part of the doorway scheme of northern Indian temples after the Gupta period,²⁴ these are crafted so finely and in the special close-grained chlorite used only for Surya and other major sculptures at the temple, that they seem to corroborate the astrological

rather than cosmological quality of this temple, as discussed in the section on origins. This quality seems to me to be also emphasized by the large number of secular sculptures present, depictions of royal life that in Debala Mitra's words "speak in no unmistakable phrases that the edifice is the realization of the dazzling dream of an ambitious and mighty king, secular to the core and with immense zest for life, who wanted an edifice which would outrival the works of his forbears and immortalize his name."²⁵ As an astrological deity, the Sun, presides over and has been extolled and invoked for worldly gains of wealth, fame, conquest and pleasure, it follows that these gifts of the god be portrayed in the life of the king as the recipient of these favours as well as the representative on earth of these powers of enjoyment in heaven of Surya. Two important scenes establish Narasimhadeva's relation with the deity. The first of these occurs in the southern niche of the *jagamohan*, where on the two sides of the image of Surya are two kneeling figures, identified as the king and his *guru*. In this scene, the king's relationship as devotee of Surya is made explicit. The other scene is placed in the centre compartment on the east side of the platform in the sanctum, where the main image of the deity was installed. This scene shows the king receiving the *Ajnamala* (garland of command) from the priest after the ceremony of life-invocation (*pratistha*) for the deity. Thus, here the king is established as the recipient of the god's favours as well as of his authority through delegation.

The astrological character of the worship of Surya is brought out also by Susan Huntington while discussing the ceremonial functions of the temple. Here we find that apart from the birthday of the Sun-god each year, other important ceremonies included the monthly passage of the Sun through the signs of the Zodiac and the celebration of equinoxes and eclipses—distinctly astrological events.²⁶ The twelve exquisite wheels giving to the *jagamohan-deul* complex the appearance of a chariot are also seen as representing the signs of the Zodiac, corresponding to the 12 months of the Sun-god's yearly course, beginning with Aries at the back and ending with Pisces at the front wheel.²⁷

However, Vedic, Puranic and Tantric elements are not absent in the temple, but show up mainly in iconographic and design considerations. The seven horses of the Sun, for example, is a Vedic image, that has been interpreted variously as the seven days of the week or the colour spectrum, but the key to the symbolism is found, I think, when one realizes that the Sun in the Vedas is the principle of Manifestation, expressing itself (travelling) along the lines of the seven Vedic worlds (Matter, Life, Mind, Supermind, Existence, Consciousness, Bliss). The Vedas see this Supreme principle of manifestation, *Surya*, as having four major aspects, represented by *Mitra*, *Varuna*, *Bhaga* and *Aryaman*.²⁸

These four, referred to as the 'Four Kings', multiply in the later Puranic literature to twelve. In the *Bhavishya Purana*, for example, which Debala Mitra suggests may be the text from which the legend of the origin of the Sun temple may have come,²⁹ these twelve are: *Dhataditya*, *Aryaman*, *Mitra*, *Varuna*, *Indra*, *Vivaswan*, *Pushan*, *Parjanya*, *Amsha*, *Bhaga*, *Twashtha*, *Vishnu*. It is not clear if there is any correlation between these

twelve forms of Surya and the twelve signs of the Zodiac. But certainly an alternative reading for the twelve wheels of the Sun-chariot is available here.

The significances of such a reading become more evident if we take into consideration the symbology of the aspects. Looking at the simplified Vedic set of four aspects, from which the twelve develop, we find the symbolism, as interpreted by Sri Aurobindo, to be. *Varuna*=Vastness, *Aryaman*=Strength, *Bhaga* (related to *bhoga*) =Delight, Enjoyment; *Mitra*=Harmony.³⁰ The twelve *Adityas* of the Puranic pantheon are derived from these through retention of the four and combination in twos to form the additional eight. Thus Surya is conceived as vast—visible to all, His light filling the furthest reaches of space; He is protean and powerful—destroying utterly the Darkness, filling all creatures with the energetic urge to awaken and act and grow, scorching the earth at noon with the extremes of His unbearable radiance, He is blissful—His great golden laughter filling the world, entering into all creatures and every smallest particle, making them dance and sing and enjoy and affirm Life, powerful waves of Bliss flowing out of His self-absorbed blissful trance, and He is the master of harmony—from His eye in heaven, seeing all and putting all things into place, uniting the teeming diversity of the universe under His single sway

If, then, a temple to Surya is to adhere to these primary aspects in form and figure, it must find sensible means of representation for them. To express the largeness or pervading vastness of the Solar existence in its aspect as *Varuna*, it may well conceive of a gigantism of scale in the architectural conception. A spatial representation of Harmony could well be designed through a complex and multitudinous diversity existing within a massive and clearly defined formal unity. Figures of Strength can be found in the majesty of deities, specially Surya himself of *Bhairava*, but also in scenes of sportive virility and valour, such as the royal sports of archery or hunting or scenes of human or animal combat. An adequate representation of the superhuman quality of Surya would include in fact the entire range of sensible expressions of the aspect represented, including its extremes, where it exists on the verge of distortion, its lunatic fringe. In the case of Strength this might be shown through figures of rage or cruelty, such as furious animals trampling human heads, unheeding. Similarly, figures of Delight or Enjoyment would run the gamut from the beatific figures of gods and their attendants and devotees, through the heavenly nymphs in various moods (*alasa kanyas*), the dancers and musicians, the scenes of domestic and royal happiness, such as the king swaying on a swing or receiving rare gifts from foreign lands, to an entire range of the moods of love. These would include sublime scenes of romantic love (*muthuna*), but befitting the intensity of bliss, they would portray too the stronger moods of sexual love (*maithuna*), and as the manifestation of its extreme, its point of distortion, all the varieties of lust.

The last may need more elaboration, seeing that Konarak houses perhaps the largest number of erotic scenes in Indian temple sculpture on its walls, in a great variety of sexual activity. Indian temple art has shown historically a growing trend towards the portrayal of *maithuna*, this trend reaching its climax at Khajuraho and Konarak

Orissan temples of the medieval period, in general, show a preponderance in this direction. The modern consciousness, all over the world, impacted by the occidental equation of morality with spirituality, has found itself bewildered before this plethora of erotica in the houses of worship. Having lost the consciousness and mentality of an earlier people, we can only try to reconstruct, through conjecture, what led to this public expression in sacred places of what is considered private or vulgar activity.

Hinduism has mostly shown an amoral stance towards religious expression, the spiritual life being seen as more closely allied to the aesthetic sphere than to the ethical. Explicit sexual references abound in Indian literature, the genre being already well established by the time of Kalidasa (5th c. C.E.). It is true that the majority of spiritual practice in India to this day enjoins celibacy as the way to spiritual realization, but here, too, it is made quite clear that celibacy is not a moral consideration, as much as a psycho-physical one. The yogi has to transform his/her sexual drive, utilizing it consciously as a lever in the unlocking of the spiritual gates, but as a part of the practice there must be an entire liberation from desire, through the establishment of a perfect psychological equality. In the process, one develops a clear understanding of the sexual force, its power and significance in nature and yoga, its alchemical properties and the truth of bliss and unity contained in its symbol. This can be a difficult process, attainable by the few, who would then be seen as outsiders to the common circle of getting and begetting. As a bold attempt to bridge this gap, and make yoga accessible to the common person, Tantra developed elaborate techniques for the use of the objects and activities of desire in their own transcendence in the consciousness of the user. Thus alcohol, fish, meat and sex, abstained from by yogis of the *Sankhya*, *Vedanta* and *Vaishnava* schools (the last with some exceptions), are used in various degrees and ways by the practitioners of the schools of Tantra. Though largely esoteric and secret, elements of these practices entered into the mainstream of Indian life, perhaps through royal patronage. Gaining popularity, these techniques showed the householder ways of ritualizing and refining his/her secular existence, leading the sexual energy, *kama*, from lust, *rati*, through love, *prema*, towards transcendental union, *yoga*.

Certain regions in India became important centres of Tantric practice. Orissa was one of these, and Tantra could well have received royal patronage here, as a great wealth of material has been found here describing the yoga postures of coitus developed by left-hand Tantra (*vama-marga*). Undoubtedly, this influence found its way onto the temple walls, the charge of sexual bliss, common and natural to human experience, becoming the sensible medium for representing the bliss of union of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, the imaged resolution of all yearning duality—matter and spirit, soul and nature—in the transcendental identity of a higher existence. For the largest part, the figures of couples, together (*mithuna*) or in coitus (*maithuna*) wear such an atmosphere of godlike poise, even in the heat of passion, that it is difficult to relate them to the human experience of sex. They remind us of the demigods, such as the *apsaras* of the world of Kalidasa's "Cloud Messenger", bearers of sublime emotional *bhavas* in their amours.

This is never more true than at Konarak. Quite apart from the representation of iconic sexual poses, the figures are imbued with and breathe the heavenly radiance of the Sun's own Bliss as *Bhaga*, or Harmony as *Mitra*. However, this is not all there is at Konarak. There are also the depictions that can be classified as little other than pornographic, based not so much on their content as on the quality of the depiction. Narayan Sanyal in his book on *Erotica in Indian Temples* makes note of this unevenness of treatment in the erotic themes at Konarak. He observes that almost without exception the scenes of fellatio, kakila and bestiality are poorly executed.³¹ This concurs with the hypothesis presented here that the Bliss of Surya is depicted in its entire variety, including the extremes of its distortion point; or as it is manifest in all seven worlds, including the lower worlds, those of the beast and the demon.

Thus, the magnificent ruin of Konarak stands as a colossal attempt to embody the spiritual reality of the Sun in architecture and sculpture; marking the ascendancy to its zenith of Hindu culture in mediaeval India—as if a snapshot of the Sun's full resplendence just prior to a six hundred year eclipse. That powerful memory still lives and haunts us in what remains of the structure, as the rubble and sad collapse is an appropriate if poignant comment on that culture's fall and failure. Indeed, if we are to assume the full significance of the Vedic solar symbol as the Supramental godhead, as given to us by Sri Aurobindo, this could not be otherwise, the complete embodiment of Surya being possible only in posterity, Konarak existing as an audacious marker in civilization's attempt to outreach itself, doomed to failure, waiting for riper conditions. Could the Matrimandir be that completer embodiment?

(Concluded)

DEBASHISH BANERJI

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THE EMERGENCE OF BIG SCIENCE

(Continued from the issue of October 1997)

7. The Collective Zeitgeist

WE have already seen the reasons for involving industries in the Manhattan Project. War exigencies of a crucial nature had to be attended to without any delay or much consideration of money. But now the collaboration, started during the War as a tactical measure to economise on time and funds for research, has become the order of the day. Science is crippled without the base of industrial expertise. Industries, in turn, fear to lose their competitive edge in the absence of joint scientific ventures.

Taking all this into account, and the end-product of the enterprise, the success of the Manhattan Project is indeed undeniable. An almost year-long intense activity on an unprecedented scale finally culminated in the manufacturing of uranium and plutonium bombs, code-named as The Little Boy and The Fat Man, respectively. The Little Boy was dropped on Hiroshima on 6th August and The Fat Man on Nagasaki on 8th August 1945. The destruction these bombs caused immediately compelled the Japanese Empire to lay down arms. The success of the Project, as far as the outcome of the War was concerned, was complete and absolute.

The champions of the humanitarian cause will perhaps continue to enumerate the ruins of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as evidence of the most disastrous man-made calamity that could ever occur in the history of mankind. But, purely from the scientific point of view, the initiation and accomplishment of the Manhattan Project were indeed a hallmark in the field of research and development. Its fruits are richly harvested even after fifty years. The unabated progress of science in subatomic and cosmological investigations, industrial growth, booming economies across the globe and the general upgrading of the standard of life-style of society are a visible testimony to it.

The essential contribution of the Manhattan Project consists in its introducing a major change in the very psychology of doing science. It was the first attempt to bring together a large number of experts, from various fields, to work in collaboration towards one target. Consequently, in doing so, it brought about revolutionary changes in the principles of management of scientific projects. These changes included:

- (i) Providing complete freedom, authority and necessary assistance to the leaders of each group of scientists. This allows the leaders of the respective teams to work in their own capacity. They do not have to worry about financial and logistical back-up.
- (ii) Setting up a competitive environment.
- (iii) Giving emphasis on positive results. Failures in Manhattan Project often ended in the abandoning of the scheme for an alternative method.
- (iv) Collaborating, wherever necessary, with the industries to exploit their existing infrastructure and expertise.

The Manhattan Project marked the transition from individual science to collective science. In fact, it was its initiator.

In the wake of this major development we should not forget or belittle the individual efforts of the earlier scientists. We may mention just a few names to illustrate this point: Newton, Faraday, Cavendish, Kelvin, Maxwell, Rutherford, Gauss, Helmholtz, Lavoisier, Clausius, Carnot, Mme Curie *et al* worked in their lonely laboratories or rooms and made very significant contributions in their respective fields. C. V. Raman was a remarkable individual and his wonderful discoveries from a small isolated place in India belong to a generation which is now fast disappearing. Even the Michelson-Morley experiment is, in a sense, a small effort compared with the present-day installations.

It is on these contributions that our jet-planes, supersonic Concorde, supercomputers, and satellite communications are based. Had these developments not taken place, we would have been surely pushed back by centuries, we would have probably travelled by bullock-cart and depended on carrier pigeons for communication. The noteworthy feature of the earlier science is that relatively it involved smaller participation from industry, financing agencies, or from technical groups. When we think of men of genius such as the Wright Brothers, Edison, Marconi, Watt, Bell, who struggled alone, under monetary constraints, with inadequate equipment, we are amazed by their accomplishments. Thanks to their efforts, gradually the scientific base expanded, frontline research entered the depths of matter and extended further out into space. The queries and their solutions now began to outgrow the possibilities of a single brain with a pair of hands. In order to face the ever-increasing challenge to unravel the growing enigmas of the physical world, we need establishments with elaborate research facilities. This is now being appreciated better and better. In contrast to work-places of the erstwhile pioneers like Faraday, Rutherford and Roentgen, we have now huge establishments. After the war a number of radiation laboratories were commissioned in the USA and in Europe. Berkeley, Argonne, Stanford, Princeton, Caltech, Harwell, Saclay, CERN, Dubna are the direct outgrowth of the new approach towards science. In India the Atomic Energy and Space programmes engage large teams for carrying out research in diverse fields like physics, chemistry, metallurgy, electronics, engineering sciences and technologies. Literally thousands of professionals from diverse fields come together and engage themselves in their respective activities. It is a different culture that has sprung up after the War. Now science requires a Hubble telescope in its quest for the origin of the universe and a 2-mile Particle Accelerator to study the quark, the minutest grade of matter recently glimpsed. The manufacturing, operation, handling as also the maintenance of these high-tech instruments necessitate the involvement of a panoply of experts, *i e*, scientists, engineers, technicians and industrial professionals.

Such a remarkable fusion of scientists and technologists has, in turn, necessitated modifications in the concept of management. Activities carried out by such specialist groups are not directly business-oriented, but involve a certain academic temper of pure research which is quite different in nature from mere pursuit of production and profit in

commercial set-ups. This has given birth to a new field of administration—the management of big science. The conventional bureaucratic techniques fail totally when it comes to dealing with exceptional people who are by themselves highly individualistic. Freedom and motivation have to go hand in hand in such an enterprise. This whole approach has its direct origin in the Manhattan Project and its principles of working that have turned out to be so radically different from the office-culture of the earlier times. In other words, this change-over from individual excellence to team-work was inevitable for science to continue its unending search for the truth of the physical world. The foundations were laid, paradoxically, in the destructive vigour of the atom bomb.

Once this trend of large-scale combined or collective effort was set into motion by the Manhattan Project, gradually the upcoming establishments involved in research too adopted this method as their working principle. In modern times we have ample evidence in this kind of joint venture as, for example,—NASA. This organisation is composed of five programme offices: (i) Aeronautics and Space Technology for the development of equipment, (ii) Space Science and Applications dealing with programmes for understanding the origin, structure and evolution of the universe, the solar system and the earth, (iii) Space Flight, (iv) Space Tracking Data, and (v) Space Station. It is doing in the commercial field what the Manhattan Project did in Government Laboratories just a generation ago. It funds different institutions for the procurement of its requirements. A number of research centres are affiliated to it; these include: the Goddard Space Centre in Greenbelt, Madison, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Centre in Houston, Texas, and the Langley Research Centre in Hampton, Virginia. Other large-scale research enterprises include computer grants like IBM and Microsoft, CERN in Europe and more recently, the mission of “Pathfinder” to Mars. We shall have a quick look at this wonderful achievement to see the far-reaching implications of the War-time Project we continue to feel and profit by. Our present-day banking system, commerce, communication, handling of mega-activities, a host of management schools, new ideas and practices of economic principles, technology-institutions supplementing the academic centres of learning—these are all an outgrowth of the Project’s developments. Indeed, a new civilisation has sprung up after the War. We do not immediately recognise how a destructive event could have brought about a new change in the society in our own times, but it is there, influencing our daily life in every respect. Perhaps social scientists should acknowledge this aspect and reinterpret the second half of this century in the context of such epoch-making developments. It speaks of the great *Zeitgeist* that is shaping men and matter for its own grandiose objectives. The Manhattan Project has not simply won the War for the progressive forces; it has also brought about a transformation in the consciousness of the society, making it more collective and global.

(To be concluded)

POLITICAL VEDANTISM— ITS CONCEPT AND PRACTICE

(Continued from the issue of June 1997)

Chapter IV

AS WAS HIS APPEARANCE SO HIS EXIT— UNEXPECTED BUT GRACEFUL

To give up one's small individual self and find the larger self in others, in the nation, in humanity, in God, that is the law of Vedanta. That is India's message '—Sri Aurobindo

THE sensational drama of one year ended on 6 May 1909 with the acquittal of Sri Aurobindo and a few of his co-accused. Those who witnessed the proceedings from the very beginning knew nothing about what was happening in the greenroom, that is to say, behind the backdrop when the drama on the stage was going on. Of this we have some relevant governmental records.

On 16 May 1908 a letter from the Governor of Bengal was despatched to the Governor General and then circulated among the top advisers. It stated:

The three men whom the Lt. Governor wishes to deport are all under arrest and awaiting trial at Alipore. If the informer's evidence can be used or if one of the other prisoners can be induced to turn king's evidence, there is a fair prospect of Aurobindo Ghose and Abinash Chandra Bhattacharya being convicted. I do not know what evidence there is against the third man, Sailendra Kumar Bose, but he is less important than the other two. It is obviously preferable that these men should be convicted by ordinary process of law rather than removed by arbitrary action under the Regulation.

We have to consider, too, the effect of deportation on the public mind. In Lajpat Rai's case deportation undoubtedly had a good effect at the time. But his comparatively early release had deprived deportation of all its terrors, and when people would have heard that Aurobindo Ghose had been deported they would have merely felt that he had gone to spend a comparatively pleasant summer at Mandalay. And while the action of the executive would on the one hand fail to strike terror, it would on the other excite much sympathy, cause great irritation, and provoke hostility to the government among those who are not hostile to us at present. To all the agitation that would arise throughout the country we should have no answer. We could not publish the reasons which led the government to take executive action, and if we did, our position would now be undoubtedly too

thin to bear the weight of criticism they would meet with in every native paper in India and many papers at home and abroad ²

Most of those among whom the letter was circulated gave the opinion that it was better to wait and see

Perhaps they presumed that the three men mentioned in the letter would be convicted. Therefore, after Sri Aurobindo's acquittal the question whether to deport him or to accept the court's verdict assumed graver proportions. The Government was in favour of making appeal against the court's verdict. But, in that case, it would not have been possible to deport him arbitrarily, besides, there was the fear that the verdict of the appellate court might not go against Sri Aurobindo. Arguments continued for several months until the warrant for his arrest was issued by the Government of Bengal on 2 April 1910. So, we will have to wait for further information on this interesting issue

On his acquittal, Sri Aurobindo, with all the co-accused who were released with him, went directly from Alipore Jail to Chittaranjan Das's house where they were given a hearty welcome and a jubilant celebration took place. They spent the whole day there before taking their leave to go back to their respective homes after a year's forced stay in the prison. Sri Aurobindo went to stay with his uncle Krishna Kumar Mitra's family. Mitra himself was at that time in jail at Agra. Here, for a week or so, Sri Aurobindo remained quiet and accepted no public engagement

It was on 14 May 1909 that he wrote a letter to the editor of the *Bengalee* in which he expressed his deep sense of gratitude to all those who had helped him in his hour of trial. In this letter he explained, with glowing humbleness, the spiritual significance of his arrest and acquittal. The last portion of the letter reads as follows

The love which my countrymen have heaped upon me in return for the little I have been able to do for them, amply repays any apparent trouble or misfortune my public activity may have brought upon me. I attribute my escape to no human agency, but first of all to the protection of the Mother of us all who has never been absent from me but always held me in Her arms and shielded me from grief and disaster, and secondarily to the prayers of thousands which have been going up to Her on my behalf ever since I was arrested. If it is the love of my country which led me into danger, it is also the love of my countrymen which has brought me safe through it ³

During the long period of trial Sri Aurobindo passed most of his time in meditation. In the Court he hardly attended to the conduct of the case. For, he knew what would be the final outcome of the trial. He had the assurance from within that he would be acquitted. He had therefore, left the case entirely to his counsel Chittaranjan Das, whose taking up the case was not a mere chance but willed by Providence, as Sri Aurobindo indicated in his famous Uttarpara Speech delivered on 30 May 1909. There

is no record of his making any statement or giving answer to any question during the hearing. All through the process he remained deeply absorbed in meditation.

It was on 30 May 1909 that Sri Aurobindo spoke in public for the first time after his release, in a public meeting organised by the *Dharma Rakshini Sabha* at Uttarpara. It was in this meeting that Sri Aurobindo spoke about his spiritual experiences. Until then only those who were around him just knew that he was a sadhak and nothing more than that, because he kept to himself all that went on within him. At Uttarpara, in obedience to a command from within, he divulged what he had experienced in the Jail. In his own words:

My Yoga begun in 1904 had always been personal and apart, those around me knew I was a sadhak but they knew little more as I kept all that went on in me to myself. It was only after my release that for the first time I spoke at Uttarpara publicly about my spiritual experiences.⁴

This was his second visit to the small town in the district of Hooghly, West Bengal, near Konnagar, his ancestral place. In this momentous speech Sri Aurobindo gave a vivid description of what had happened to him during the preceding one year since his arrest on 2 May 1908 and what he had realised during the period of seclusion in the Alipore Jail, which had become to him a centre of austerity—a Yogashram.

In his long speech he calmly revealed what he had learnt from his inner Guide and what he was commanded to do through two messages. The first message said: "I have given you a work, and it is to help to uplift this nation."⁵ Then came the second message, "Something has been shown to you in this year of seclusion. When you go forth, speak to your nation that it is for the world and not for themselves that they arise. I am giving them freedom for the service of the world."⁶ The message also said, "I have shown you that I am everywhere and in all men and in all things, that I am in this movement and I am not only working in those who are striving for the country but I am working also in those who oppose them and stand in their path. They also are doing my work, they are not my enemies but my instruments. In all your actions you are moving forward without knowing which way you move. It is Shakti that has gone forth and entered into the people. Since long ago I have been preparing this uprising and now the time has come and it is I who will lead it to its fulfilment."⁷

Besides the experience which Sri Aurobindo narrated in his Uttarpara speech, he had also a few deep realisations during the period of seclusion which he recounted in his *Karakahini*, an unfinished Bengali work.

In this small book he gave an account of his outer and inner experiences. He speaks of his incarceration in Alipore Jail having provided him with the opportunity for practising Yoga. So to him it had not been a prison but an ashram—a cave of tapasya. Here he attained *Vasudev Siddhi*. He had direct vision of Narayana in the heart. He realised the Lord of the Universe, Purushottama, as his friend and master.

Later to his disciples in Pondicherry he narrated another experience: "It is a fact

that I was hearing constantly the voice of Vivekananda speaking to me for a fortnight in the Jail in my solitary meditation and felt his presence ”⁸ On another occasion he stated that it was the spirit of Vivekananda who first gave him a clue in the direction of what Sri Aurobindo later called Supermind

In regard to his outer experience he sarcastically describes the prevailing conditions in and around the Jail which spoke for themselves.—how inhumane the British administration could be in India

After his release from jail Sri Aurobindo immediately realised that there was a complete change in the political atmosphere The fire and enthusiasm had died down Most of the leaders of the Nationalist Party were in prison, or in seclusion, that is to say, self-imposed exile There was general discouragement and depression The morale of the people had sunk low, yet resentment against the British continued unabated In his speech at Uttarpara Sri Aurobindo spoke of this distressing phenomenon “When I came out, I looked round for those to whom I had been accustomed to look for counsel and inspiration I did not find them When I went to Jail the whole country was alive with the cry of *Bande Mataram*, alive with the hope of a nation, the hope of millions of men who had newly risen out of degradation When I came out of Jail I listened for that cry, but there was instead a silence A hush had fallen on the country and men seemed bewildered ”⁹

But Sri Aurobindo was not disheartened by that silence, because he had been made familiar with it in the prison

“So, without being disheartened Sri Aurobindo girded his loins and resumed his public activity He wrote, he spoke, he conferred He exhorted his countrymen not to be disheartened but to take courage and rise to the occasion ”¹⁰

Shortly Sri Aurobindo found a few glowing faces gathering around him Some of them requested him to revive the *Bande Mataram* because the movement he just started needed an organ as it had done before Others suggested that it would be better if Sri Aurobindo would take over the editorship of the *Bengalee* of Surendra Nath Banerjee, which was at that time a growing concern Sri Aurobindo rejected both the proposals He wanted to break fresh ground by running journals entirely of his own Thus the *Karmayogin*—a weekly review of National Religion, Literature, Science, Philosophy, etc —appeared on 19 June 1909, just six weeks after his release, and the *Dharma*, a Bengali weekly, on 23 August 1909

In expounding the purpose of its appearance, Sri Aurobindo stated the following in the first article under the title ‘Ourselves’ of the *Karmayogin*

The *Karmayogin* comes into the field to fulfil a function which an increasing tendency in the country demands The life of the nation which once flowed in a broad and single stream has long been severed into a number of separate meagre and shallow channels The two main floods have followed the paths of religion and politics, but they have flowed separately Our political activity has crept in a channel cut for it by European or Europeanised minds, it tended always to a

superficial wideness, but was deficient in depth and volume. The national genius, originality, individuality poured itself into religion, while our politics were imitative and unreal. Yet without a living political activity national life cannot, under modern circumstances, survive. So also there has been a stream of social life, more and more muddied and disturbed, seeking to get clearness, depth, largeness, freedom, but always failing and increasing in weakness or distraction. There was a stream too of industrial life, faint and thin, the poor survival of the old vigorous Indian artistic and industrial capacity murdered by unjust laws and an unscrupulous trade policy. All these ran in disconnected channels, sluggish, scattered and ineffectual. The tendency is now for these streams to unite again into one mighty invincible and grandiose flood. To assist that tendency, to give voice and definiteness to the deeper aspirations now forming obscurely within the national consciousness is the chosen work of the *Karmayogin*.¹¹

In the same article Sri Aurobindo explained his objectives

We have yet to know ourselves, what we were, are and may be, what we did in the past and what we are capable of doing in the future, our history and our mission. This is the first and most important work which the *Karmayogin* sets for itself, to popularise this knowledge. And the second thing is how to use these assets so as to swell the sum of national life and produce the future. The third thing is to know the outside world and its relation to us and how to deal with it. That is the problem which we find at present most difficult and insistent, but its solution depends on the solution of the others.

The reawakening of that force in three hundred millions of men by means which our past has placed in our hands, that is our object.¹²

(To be continued)

SAMAR BASU

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BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

A Follower of Christ and A Disciple of Sri Aurobindo Correspondence between Bede Griffiths and K D Sethna (Amal Kiran) Publishers. The Integral Life Foundation, P O Box 239, Waterford CT , 06385, U.S.A. Price. Rs. 100

RUNS a Telugu adage, ‘‘For fight as for marital relationship (*kayyāniki*, *viyyāniki*) one must have one’s match’’ Perhaps, Amal Kiran met his match only once,—when he crossed swords with Kathleen Raine not only to defend his stand on Blake’s *Tyger* but to demonstrate that Indians writing in English, especially those like Sri Aurobindo, were not a whit inferior to those to whom English was their native tongue. Amal controverted with many intellectuals like K M Munshi. It must be pointed out that Bede Griffiths was certainly no match for Amal. Griffiths had however his great merits. Else Amal would not have made his *First Move*—his writing to Fr. John Martin, a student of Griffiths’s, a long letter in response to his sending him a few articles of his teacher. Praising Griffiths’s insights, even while mentioning a few oversights, Amal published his letter under the caption *An Aurobindonian Christian* in an issue of *Mother India*, a Monthly Review of Culture, which he has ably edited from 1949 single-handed till the other day when he took Mr. R. Y. Deshpande as Associate Editor. Griffiths’s response to the letter began a long Correspondence which ran from 11 February 1983 to 4 December 1984.

What distinguishes Griffiths from other Christians is his ability to see in the Vedanta and more so in Sri Aurobindo truths to which others are blind. He shows a special affinity towards Sri Aurobindo which Amal recognised when he called him an Aurobindonian Christian. What we find in Griffiths is a mystico-spiritual urge that Amal misses in even a person of the stature of Cardinal Newman in whom he finds no more than a very cultured religious fervour. Griffiths, in fact, after moving to India, switches over from the fulfilment theory of Christianity to what he calls ‘‘complementarity’’:

Each religion has a unique understanding of the One Mystery of Being and it expresses it in its own images and concepts but all are ultimately complementary.

Griffiths has a rare poetic sensibility that enables him to see the magic of Amal’s poetry: he responds to the mystical element in the poems. He responds especially to Amal’s adaptation of the last canto of Dante’s *Divina Commedia*. Comparing it with the original he finds the rendering excellent. It is a judgment such as even Kathleen Raine herself is not capable of!

Notwithstanding all his exceptional qualities, Griffiths disappoints us by being not so much ‘‘a follower of Christ’’ as a blind believer in the dogmas and doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. He takes it for granted that whatever has been accepted by the Church has been through the ages inspired by the Holy Spirit. He says:

I regard the Roman Church (as St. Irenaeus did as early as the Second Century) as the centre of orthodoxy and the ultimate criterion

To the disciple of Sri Aurobindo who is familiar with Roman Catholicism as well as the New Testament in the most authentic Roman Catholic rendering, the New Jerusalem Bible, no less than the most recent work of the Roman Catholic writers, such an attitude is untenable. It is the complaint of Griffiths that Amal attacks what are matters of faith like the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, the Second Coming and brings in questions like Pantheism where the follower of Christ has his own views.

Amal makes it clear that he would not have entered into a discussion on the subject of Virgin Birth if Griffiths himself in his writings as well as his present correspondence had not made a claim for Christianity as being unique because of certain extraordinary historical phenomena. Amal is prepared to accept the Virgin Birth as a powerful symbol but not as a historical fact. In a brief review it is impossible to sum up Amal's stand based at once on a thorough mastery of all the literature available on the subject and on his own logical perception. Griffiths quotes the Katha Upanishad in defence of his stand.

This doctrine is not gained by argument

Amal knows his Upanishads too well to allow the defence. The Upanishad does not refer to a doctrine but the experience of the Atman. Amal shows how not only are Mark and John silent on the subject of the Virgin Birth but Mark shows how Jesus's attitude to his mother does not indicate any such possibility. Paul also regards Mary to have borne Jesus like any other woman. Modern scholars like Raymond Brown and others do not take the Virgin Birth for granted.

Closely related to the question of Virgin Birth is the Resurrection of Christ. Griffiths's own words about the subject would help us to see why Amal is forced to oppose his views.

. the transformation of the body is an important element in Christianity. The physical transformation which took place in Mary was seen as related to the physical transformation of the body of Christ in the resurrection, and this again as foreshadowing the physical transformation of man and the universe. This is where I find Sri Aurobindo's insistence on the transformation of matter and body so significant.

The last sentence is revealing, it shows the specific reason for Griffiths's interest in Sri Aurobindo. It is his contention that in Jesus's own resurrection and the physical transformation of man at the end of the world as foreshadowed in it one could see what Sri Aurobindo called the Supramental transformation. Griffiths even goes to the extent of saying that Jesus has achieved what Sri Aurobindo speaks of but never achieved in

his own life. He also implies that even the Mother could not achieve it.

The disciple of Sri Aurobindo knows that the descent of the Supermind and the transformation of the Physical were never dreamt of even by the Indian Seers who had a glimpse of the Supermind. The whole lives of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were a struggle towards bringing down the Supermind and making it a part of the earth-consciousness. Elsewhere Amal points out that the physical transformation is adjourned *sine die* with the passing of the Mother. He tries to prove how Jesus's body was not actually transformed in the sense Sri Aurobindo speaks of. Of course, none can convince another against his will; Griffiths sticks to his own belief.

As for the Second Coming and the end of the world also, Amal shows clearly that when Jesus spoke of them he was referring to a period very near to his own and not some indefinite time.

In the elaborate argument about Pantheism, Amal makes out how in the best mystical experience of the Christians there is the experience of Pantheism.

What makes the Correspondence really valuable is the light thrown by Amal on the various aspects discussed with a reading that is astonishingly wide and deep. That Amal should reveal the same mastery in every field, whether it is history, science, literature or any other, shows the uncommonness of his powers and genius. What is more charming is his generous praise of the person he is arguing with even when the other person is impatient of argument.

We also see that the disciple of Sri Aurobindo knows his Bible, and Christianity itself, far better than the follower of Christ.

K B SITARAMAYYA